

THESE MEN I KNEW

ROSITA FORBES

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ROSITA FORBES



These Men I Knew



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FOR
CHARLES EADE
WHO SAID THIS BOOK MUST BE WRITTEN
AND FOR
RALPH PINKER
WHO MADE THE WRITING OF IT POSSIBLE

FOREWORD

IN TWENTY YEARS OF TRAVEL, IT HAPPENS THAT I HAVE MET most of the men who—to-day—are making war, or struggling to prevent it in four continents. The only one of them whom I interviewed was Hitler when he first became Chancellor in 1933. But some have been my friends for years, and others the acquaintances of a few days or weeks. At times when we discussed subjects that seemed to me of exceptional interest, I made notes in copy-books. For I supposed some day I would have to write an autobiography after the fashion of my generation. But—with a few exceptions—the art seems to have died with the letter-writers of the last century. So—delighted by the idea that I need not now undertake so disagreeable and personal an exposition—I offer to those interested in the ideas behind the war, in the characters more than the circumstances which have contributed to it, these slight impressions of the men and women who have made our world.

No two people agree about the mentality of a third. It is improbable that any of us see men like Hitler, Stalin, or Mussolini from exactly the same angle. To begin with, even Dictators talk quite differently to an ordinary woman than they do to Ministers and Diplomatists. What they say is not so important, of course, but it sometimes shows unexpected facets of personalities which have disturbed and bewildered us for years. Obviously, the views expressed by most of the men in this book are not at all my own. In many cases they are diametrically opposed to mine. So if—as an

introduction to other and later aspects—I have shown Hitler as I first knew him with an idealist's conception of 'a free Germany for her working-men,' and Stalin as an obstinate, at times bewildered, disciple of Lenin, it is NOT because I think of them as such. It is either because they did begin as quite different people from what they are to-day, or because at first they deluded themselves into supposing they were prophets instead of gangsters. In other words, I am responsible for none of the convictions expressed in these pages by the villains and the heroes of the battle which we fight to-day for the simplest and soundest of all civilized principles.

As Dorothy Thompson says: "Our generation has an appointment with destiny." These are the men who have made that appointment——

ONE

★

ADOLF HITLER

I. FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF HITLER

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT NO MAN IN THE WORLD HAS CHANGED so much in six and a half years as Adolf Hitler.

In June, 1933, I was taken to see him for the first time by a young German musician. We found the new Chancellor seated behind an enormous desk. He was drawing small, architecturally correct houses on a sheet of blotting-paper.

Looking up at us, he said—without introduction—“I do hate destruction.”

Presumably he was thinking of the old buildings round the Tiergarten which as an artist he admired, but whose demolition—as a realist—he already contemplated.

We sat on the other side of the desk and at intervals Hitler altered or added to his drawings while he talked.

“It is happiness,” said Adolf Hitler, “that I want for Germany. I would like to put men back on to the land and women back into the home. It is not necessary that life should be so complicated. We can do with much less than we have been taught to require, but we must have something.

“That ‘something’ is what I will give to Germany—self-respect first, confidence and security and a little money, a little comfort and of course health.”

Outside the door of the Chancellor’s study stood two magnificent specimens of his Personal Bodyguard. They measured well over six feet and when they raised their arms in the Roman salute, they might have been acknowledging the plaudits of an arena.

There was a bronzed, young secretary who ought to have been a gladiator. Consequently, my first impression of the

new Germany which revolves round Adolf Hitler was one of youth and health. I was greeted by a small man who had no tricks of any kind. In a modern room, panelled with squares of unpolished African mahogany, we sat and discussed civilization and the simple life, war, women, and the monarchy.

"I have heard you called the Moloch of culture," I said when I realized the Chancellor appreciated frankness.

"It is possible to have too much culture. So many of the more advertised writers put reason before instinct. That is wrong. We Nazis appeal to the emotions rather than to the intellect.

"There is a child in every grown-up person and to that child we appeal, with music, flags, oratory, and all the other symbols which it understands. We have thought with our heads too long. Now we must feel with our hearts."

Hitler has intelligent blue eyes and a simple manner. A wisp of brown hair falls across his forehead, but he is unconscious of it. In ordinary conversation he doesn't think of himself or of the impression he is making.

In a few words, without gestures or any unnecessary movement, he tried to express the spirit of Nazi-ism.

"Nationalism and Socialism are great ideas. It is by the combination of the two that Germany will be re-created. In true Socialism there is no class distinction. All Nazis are brothers. Among them there is no privilege or prejudice. We believe in complete equality between all Germans."

"National Socialism," he said, "is directly opposed to Communism because it is against class warfare. We are pacifist in the broadest sense of the word because we want peace between classes as well as nations."

In the quiet, brown room the only ornament was a bust of Hindenburg. Hitler glanced at it as he said: "I do not want war. None of us wants war. But pacifism if it is carried too far, becomes the most abject form of defeatism. Germany

was obsessed by the fact that she had lost the war. She had no spirit left.

"She was a nation defeated spiritually as well as materially, and as such she could play no part in the reconstruction of Europe."

Hitler continued: "The Nazis are restoring the honour of Germany. They are teaching the people to hold up their heads again. We don't want revenge, but we want self-respect. Compare the situation in Europe with a business deal. Character is as important in a nation as in a man.

"You wouldn't want as a partner anybody who was not strong and self-reliant.

"It should be the same thing at Geneva. No nation can be of use to its fellows unless it is well organized and internally secure. The re-creation of Germany promises peace not war in Central Europe.

There was a pause.

Hitler's simplicity was infectious, but it seemed to me that, in the Chancellor's mind, German obligations to *Germany* would take precedence of German obligations to the rest of the world. For, like the majority of his compatriots, Adolf Hitler finds it impossible to comprehend foreign points of view.

"Everywhere," I said, "I see men drilling."

Hitler smiled. "Most countries dislike soldiering. Drilling seems to them a childish waste of time, but the German loves a uniform. He likes to be part of a disciplined mass striving for a definite purpose.

"All he wants is to obey orders and to feel himself strongly governed. Consequently, National Socialism, appealing as it does to the strongest instincts of the ordinary man, must bear an aspect of militarization.

"The German feels bigger and happier, more efficient and more sure of himself if he wears a uniform. So we give him one because we want to re-create the feeling of comradeship."

I said: "Emil Ludwig told Stalin that the German loves order more than freedom."

"Freedom," said the Chancellor, "is something of a fantasy. If you have a crowd of people getting in each other's way in a small space, what use is freedom to them? Order is much more important."

"Freedom, to my mind, means a sensible and purposeful collaboration."

"Democracy is failing all over the world because it sacrifices common sense and duty and honour to the will-o'-the-wisp of freedom."

"The German Republic maintained its position by force. It was hidden force certainly, but effective nevertheless. The Nazis have been accused of every form of violence, but they themselves have suffered more injuries than they have inflicted."

"In recent years my Party has lost over 300 dead and 12,000 wounded or injured. I had to open a special insurance department at the Brown House in Munich to deal with the maintenance of relatives."

"You parade at least the semblance of force," I suggested.

"That is common sense. Nobody listens to the weak. Ten years ago my party numbered seven. Twelve months later I had 3000 recruits. To-day 70 per cent of Germany is Nazi."

"To-morrow it is possible that I shall be able to repeat the words of Wilhelm II in 1914: 'I know no parties. I know only Germany.'

"You talk of democracy—I tell you the right and the purpose of democracy is to choose the best leader and follow him to the end."

Adolf Hitler is certain that he is the only possible leader, and even his most vindictive opponents agree that the Nazi revolution was inevitable.

We talked of frontiers. The Statesman took the place of the Idealist.

“ We don’t want to make war on anyone. We hope to come to an understanding with France by means of common sense. Some day we hope for a sensible readjustment of our other problems, but these are questions for the future.

“ They are not imminent. Germany will be sufficiently occupied for a long time with the solution of her internal difficulties. The last thing we want is more territory.

“ What would be the use of conquering several more millions of unemployed? We’ve enough to do with our own.”

“ What are you going to do with them? ” I asked.

“ By the end of the year I hope to have another million at work.” Hitler spoke of the absorption into industry of several hundred thousand and of increasing agricultural production.

“ I appeal to all women to go back to their homes and to the ideals of the German housewife. I don’t want women workers—I want German wives and mothers, fully occupied in bringing up large families.

“ What am I going to do for the German woman? That is an easy question. I’m going to provide for her a greatly improved type of German man! ”

“ What are you going to do for all the enthusiastic young people who regard you as their last hope? ”

“ Germany’s ‘lost generation’ is finding itself—the brown uniform is a symbol of service. I believe there is a great deal of talk in your country about the disillusioned post-War generation which is impatient with its elders because they’re not content to grow old and stand aside.

“ With you, age wants to remain young and to cling at the same time to its perquisites and privileges, so that youth sees itself growing old without ever having had a chance. That’s not the case in Nazi Germany.

“ Fifty thousand young men have found administrative posts. Hundreds of thousands are working full time in the Party ranks. The Nazi movement is one of youth and health.”

"Do you contemplate the restoration of the monarchy?"

"No," said Hitler. "At present the monarchy is like sour wine to the average German. It is a vintage which has gone bad in the cellar. It may be a question for the remote future. The German people have a right to select their own ruler, but it is unlikely they would choose as king any prince who has not worked for the new movement."

So much, I thought, for the possibility of the Crown Prince's restoration.

Before I took leave of the man who at forty-four stands shoulder to shoulder with other creators of contemporary history, I asked him three personal questions for my own satisfaction.

"What quality do you most admire in men?"

"Courage and constancy."

"And in women?"

The Chancellor laughed. "That is more difficult. Understanding, I think, and a homely kindness."

"What has most moved or hurt you during your struggle? What single episode has most affected your life?"

Hitler looked at me and looked at the carpet. His hands twisted as if he were a boy wondering if he could bear to tell the truth. Then, with the utmost simplicity, he said: "*The death of a woman.*"

He meant his mother. She was a quiet, understanding person who influenced her son towards the Catholic Church.

Standing beside her grave, penniless except for a small sum which he hoped would take him to Vienna, Hitler shed the first tears he remembers and vowed to be a painter.

He shed no more until—in 1918—as a corporal, gassed and almost sightless, he heard of Germany's defeat and—so he told me—of the proclamation of the Republic.

It was then that he made another vow, to be first and foremost a politician.

II. HITLER TELLS HIS OWN LIFE

IN THAT FIRST SUMMER OF MY ACQUAINTANCE WITH ADOLF Hitler he spoke simply enough of his early life. Apparently it pleased him to remember the struggles which brought him from the builder's scaffold to the Chancery.

“My life,” he said, “has been without amusement. It has been a succession of struggles against poverty and loneliness, against Communism and the so-called democratic parties, against Capital and International Finance, the Press, public opinion, bureaucracy, lies, terrorism, and persecution.

“I was born at Braunau, a little wooden village of the old Bavaria” (in 1889). “My father was an orphan who had worked his way up to the position of a small Customs official.

“My mother was the child of a poor peasant. It was she who encouraged me to be an artist, while my father, who died when I was thirteen, wanted me to follow his example and be an ‘official.’

“That was the wish of every German father for his son. I was educated with other village boys at the National School, and then I went to the Realschule at Linz on the Danube, but the death of my mother in 1906 forced me to earn my own living.

“I started for Vienna which seemed to me then the capital of the world, but by the time I got there my fifty crowns were exhausted.

“Nobody would look at my paintings and I had to give up my dreams of becoming an architect.

“In fact, it was all I could do to get a job as a builder's

assistant, but while I was mixing mortar on some high scaffolding I used to look down at the beautifully dressed people driving in fine carriages—I used to think about politics.

“I was always seeking the real German spirit. A ‘Greater Germany Movement’ was started late in the nineteenth century, and I imagined at first I would find traces of its continuation among the well-to-do. But it was soon obvious to me that no national and at the same time evolutionary movement can exist among the middle classes.

“The bourgeois is too individual. His home is his castle. He doesn’t want to risk anything at all.

“The working people are more vital, but I didn’t find among the Austrians the comradeship for which I had hoped. My companions—masons, bricklayers, carpenters, and joiners—were mostly ‘Red,’ and when I wouldn’t join a trade-union organization more interested in ‘Left’ politics than in bettering the conditions of the workers, I had a bad time.

“However, I managed somehow to get a job as an architect’s draughtsman, and I used to save up all I earned and only have one meal a day in order to buy books.

“By the time I was twenty-three, I’d realized that the whole of the Austrian Empire was a clumsy contrivance for the support of the Hapsburg system, so I went back to Munich where I became a student, supporting myself by hawking round a few water-colour drawings.

“I was always hungry because I never could resist a book.

“In February, 1914, I managed to get an exemption from serving in the Austrian Army, and six months later, the very day war was declared, I made a special appeal to King Ludwig, and so obtained permission to serve in the German Army.

“In October, 1917, as a corporal, I was wounded by a splinter of shell, but I returned to my regiment in the following March.

" I treated the war as a crusade. I lived as an ascetic, had no women in my life, refused leave and pay.

" The end of it came on 14 October 1918, when with many of my comrades I was knocked out by the new mustard gas which the British were using for the first time.

" When I heard of the Revolution, I was sightless in hospital.

" After I had recovered I returned to Bavaria and joined the Time Volunteers.

" This organization was composed chiefly of students and old soldiers, workmen and country people. It resisted the ultra-Lefts, and after a time the officer commanding my battalion used me as an agent to go about among the workers and find out what they felt.

" In this way I came in contact with many different societies, for Germany at that time was banded into endless small and ineffective groups.

" It happened one evening in an obscure beer-house that I attended a meeting of six men, and I thought they talked sense. So I went to more of their gatherings and finally, instead of founding a new party as I'd intended, I became the seventh of the group which was later the nucleus of the National Socialist German workers.

" Twelve months later, in 1920, I was addressing mass meetings of thousands. But meanwhile I had reformed the Party and become its leader.

" How I scratched a living I don't know. I shared a single portion of food each day with a well-known Bavarian, now a Minister. I still haunted bookshops and read when I ought to have been sleeping.

" I studied history, and learned that throughout Central and Eastern Europe the Jews had caused a ferment of decomposition.

" In Britain you have Jews who are great Imperialists and who have helped to build up your national prestige, but the

Hebrew has always been hostile to the pure German tradition.

“ Since the Revolution Jews have occupied strategic positions.

“ My whole programme, which was published almost simultaneously with Mussolini’s earlier principles and is not, therefore, the blind imitation of Fascism which it is accused of being, is based on the intrinsic vitality of the working classes.

“ I admire Mussolini more than all other statesmen, but our systems are of necessity different. Nazi-ism is based on co-operative representation. It appeals to the worker because *it eliminates class without class warfare*.

“ It appeals to every active and vigorous element in the country. That’s why, in the Storm Troops, you will find a tailor, a peasant, an engineer, and an ex-colonel marching perhaps under the leadership of a great, husky, unemployed man, without any consciousness of the differences between them.

“ I remember the first time my personal bodyguards were brought into contact with the Social Democrats.

“ It was at a huge meeting at the Hofbrauhaus, the famous tavern in Munich.

“ My political opponents stormed the platform, and were driven back at the cost of a good many broken heads by my people.

“ After another meeting where there must have been several thousands in the audience, a huge Communist came up to me and banged a couple of pistols on the table. He had an Irish type of face and five knife scars across it.

“ He said : ‘ I came here intending to shoot you. But now you’ve convinced me. I’m going to work for you.’ Since then he’s been a pioneer of Nazi-ism among the Munich ‘ Reds.’

“ Munich saw my Storm Troops sweep—unarmed—

through the streets until, in the square before the Odeon, a cordon of hidden police advanced suddenly and fired at close range.

“ Sixteen Nazis were killed. I was wounded.

“ This was the turning-point in my career.

“ I fell wounded in the arm and was dragged into a motor by my comrades and hurried out to a village, where I was subsequently arrested.

“ From a court which was divided against itself I received a five-year sentence, of which I served only eight months.

“ In December, 1924, I was released and was able within a couple of months to attract four and five thousand people to my meetings.

“ After that things moved quickly. Soon all Germany was with me. I had the power even before I was Chancellor ! ” Hitler repeated his determination to do “ all things legally and nothing that was illegal.” Even then I wondered how long he would be of the same mind !

III. SECOND IMPRESSIONS OF HITLER

IN LATE JULY, OR IT MAY HAVE BEEN AUGUST OF 1933, I WENT back to Germany. The Chancellor again received me. This time large, impressive young men came into the room, clicked their heels, and talked about 'the Leader,' whom I was waiting to see. They shone with health and vigour. They were quite certain about the future of everything. Germany was forging ahead. She was once again united. There would be freedom for everyone and, of course, bread.

From the next room came the sound of voices. One was almost inaudible. The other suggested a thunderstorm.

In the middle of a peal of words, the door of Hitler's study opened, and out of it came Goering. He swept through the large young men as a flame through brushwood.

The simile of the flame struck me at once, for there are two Goerings. One is a tired man, oppressed by the multitude of demands made on him, conscious of worn nerves and over-driven brain, acutely sensitive because, even in the War, during which he fought gallantly, he could not achieve all that he expected of himself, depressed and in depression weak. The other is a dominant personality, a firebrand, ruthless and unreasoning, destructive when his passion blazes into action, because he isn't even aware of opposition. He sweeps everything before him. I imagine he doesn't wait to think.

In the middle of a conversation his face is often blank. In repose, his lips are set and his eyes look into a world beyond reach of his companions. When he burst out of the Chancellor's study he appeared not to see the large young men, or the

furniture, or myself. When he had gone the room seemed empty.

"That is the hero of women—they all love him, and he doesn't remember them for an hour," said a youth, whose size was the measure of his sentimentality.

Then I was shown into the study, expecting wreckage after a tempest—surely nobody could stand up to Goering and remain unmoved—but a small, quiet man shook hands with me and said: "It is nice of you to come back so soon to Germany," in the sort of voice one reserves for one's friends.

Hitler could always succeed in giving the impression of a man who dares to be supremely honest. All that he says he feels at the moment—but probably only for the moment. He does not affect great knowledge. He speaks extremely simply. When puzzled, he looks down and twists his hands. That morning there was nothing violent about him, not even the contrast between his fair skin and his hair, which is brown, not black, so that in reality his moustache does not stand out as it does in photographs. His eyes, while he is still on the defensive, are a trifle vacant, but as he becomes interested his whole face and person reflects what he feels, so that in ordinary conversation his is like the steady glow of a hearth as opposed to Goering's erratic pyre.

Adolf Hitler's genius and the effect he has both on the individual and the mass are due to the ruthless simplicity with which he meets and disposes of the most complicated problems.

The second time I met him we talked of international finance, and I couldn't help remembering another occasion when I sat on a shabby sofa in Knightsbridge with Gandhi eating celery at my feet. I asked the Indian Nationalist how he would defend the frontiers of what is really a continent against forces ranging from Bolshevism to Afridi looters, and he replied in words more suited to Judea of two thousand

years ago than to the modern world armed for aggression : “ We shall not need to fight if we are free.”

The German Chancellor affected an equal idealism in describing his schemes. He told me how he would remit taxes, so that the price of goods would fall, everybody would start buying and production would automatically increase, bringing more employment.

“ But what about revenue ? ” I asked. “ You’re going to spend enormous sums on the unemployed and at the same time, with your exports falling, you’re going to decrease taxation and give innumerable bonuses, including dowries for penniless brides. Where’s the money to come from ? ”

Hitler said : “ We needn’t rely on foreign markets and export trade. We can do with a simpler standard of living all round. The rich must help the poor.”

“ But when the rich are no longer rich ? ” I pressed him, and immediately the fanatic, who can move millions by the sheer force of his own temporary belief, leaped out behind the mask of the man of affairs.

“ It is the spirit of Germany which matters. If we eat grass to-day what does it signify so long as that spirit is reborn ? ”

“ But,” said I, “ the German housewife looks to you for bread, the German girl (encouraged by the new marriage bonus) counts on you for a husband, and the German youth for work.”

I am sure Hitler has never had an *opinion* in his life. He has grown up with one *conviction* after another, so he is never at a loss because there is nothing too big for him to attempt. He is an ascetic who has lived with dreams and nightmares.

At the end of a conversation concerning land settlement, I asked him why he wanted to interfere in women’s affairs. Hitler shrugged his shoulders and seemed confused.

For the sake of a simple peasant who died when her son

was seventeen, leaving him with a total fortune of fifty Austrian crowns and a burning ambition to be a good painter and a great German, he sees all women as mothers of the race, not as wives and lovers and companions of men.

He has littered Germany with pamphlets telling her matrons that if they smoke they will not bear the large families which their country needs.

He has forbidden them cosmetics as well as their position in the labour market.

Women are to stay at home, while fathers and brothers and sons work for them.

All this because the Chancellor remembers his mother and has no wife to preach equality.

We returned to the subject of the land. There were swamps to be drained in Silesia, forests to be felled in Bavaria. "Give a man even an acre of land and he will cease to be a Communist," said the Chancellor. "Every man should possess some concrete scrap of Germany. Develop his sense of possession, let him realize that he must protect what is irrevocably his own, and he will no longer gamble with Bolshevism."

Developing the same theme, one of the large young men, artist and politician, said: "I can tell you there is more joy over one Communist who is honestly converted than over half a dozen reactionaries doddering into our ranks in the hopes of peace beyond understanding, for with the exception of the Nazis, the Communists have been the only active element in Germany."

After that particular interview, I wrote in my diary: 'Hitler in the Bavarian Tyrol, where he has a small farmhouse near the Austrian frontier, does not differ greatly from the Chancellor in his Berlin office. His fanaticism goes well with the mountains and the picturesque villages. A Puritan surrounded by a curious mixture of intelligent decadents,

of inquisitors, idealists who are capable of murder and crusaders with the methods of gangsters, by artists striving to be practical, and financiers juggling with precedent in order to be on both the safe and winning side, but beyond these by the stalwart, enthusiastic youth of Germany, he has united the peasant and the labourer with the student, the tradesman with the artisan, but he has not reached the feudal classes. With few exceptions, these have shut themselves up within their own walls, offering a passive resistance to the Chancellor's schemes for settling unemployed upon estates which are still measured in miles.'

It was after a frugal meal in his wooden chalet that Hitler repeated: "Wealth is the servant of the country, but not of one particular class. We have saved Germany from Bolshevism and from foreign control in order to teach Germans their responsibility towards each other. We must live simply in order that there may be enough for everyone. That is what I want for German-speaking peoples—that everybody should have SOMETHING."

It seemed to me then that the Chancellor would not shrink from lowering the standard of living, so long as he could stretch it to include the last and least member of a Germanic union which should include starving Austrians as well as unemployed Germans.

But in the Tiergarten of Berlin, I came upon him by accident one night, walking alone, in front of the great houses, with his head tilted back so that he could look up at the magnificent façades.

Perhaps he was criticizing the opulence of other generations, but it seemed to me that as an architect Hitler was admiring once again the splendour which, as a politician, he was forced to destroy.

IV. GERMANY TALKS OF HITLER IN 1934

IT WAS AUGUST, 1934. "IN GERMANY THERE IS ONLY ONE opinion," said the Nazis.

"In Germany," retorted the intellectuals, "there is no opinion at all. The people are muddled. Eighteen months ago they were assured of the millennium. It hasn't arrived. They go on hoping, but they have ceased to think."

Neither statement accurately represented the Germany I saw. Hitler had with him the vast majority of the middle class, the best and most active of German youth, the army which on the whole was then sensibly liberal, and a considerable proportion of the workers.

Against him were the landowners, the Communists, the intelligentsia who objected to the arts being shackled to propaganda, the peasant-farmers who, under the new law of inheritance, felt themselves reduced to the position of life-tenants, the Jews, and those Catholics to whom Rome was more important than their own country.

In Berlin a great industrialist, married to a Jewess, summed up the position by saying: "Hitler will never swallow the Junkers and one day he will die of indigestion."

He continued: "The President-Chancellor is a Biblical prophet, inspired by the Germany of Frederick the Great. He is too honest even to be practical. Goering is a freebooter, a typical soldier of the Thirty Years War, a good fellow who likes luxury, keeps a mistress, and sympathizes with the upper class. Goebbels is the extreme Socialist, bitter, shrewd, and narrow. He would be more at home as a militant Communist."

The manager of a paint factory continued the theme :

“ Hitler is the king of the middle class who have benefited by the elimination of Jewish competition. In politics he is your Ramsay MacDonald, converted by the financiers. His power in the country is remarkable. He can change his policy in a day and carry the people with him. By the stroke of a pen he can eliminate fifteen years of bitterness and make peace with Poland. He could disband the S.A. and remain their hero. His sincerity is a rock. And there is no one else.”

I talked with an S.S. trooper who had been present during the executions in the Berlin barracks on June 30—the St. Bartholomew’s Night of Nazi Germany. He said : “ It was horrible, but it had to be done. Hitler risked his life when he went unarmed at five in the morning to Roehm’s house at Wiessee. That is a gesture which appeals to us all. The rebels thought themselves so much in command of the situation that Herr Uhl actually put his hand on Hitler’s shoulder to arrest him.

“ The Führer hit him across the face and went upstairs alone to Roehm’s room. While he was there two lorries full of the Chief-of-Staff’s own guards arrived. Hitler went out on to the balcony and told them to return to Munich. They hesitated. The Führer faced them without even a revolver. ‘ You have only one leader,’ he told them, and they went.”

It was then generally acknowledged by the many Germans whom I met, that Roehm’s head had been turned by the acclamations which as Hitler’s right hand he received wherever he went and which he attributed to his own popularity. He lived ‘ as a Roman Emperor,’ but believed that his Socialist speeches and personal accessibility would cover the libertine luxury of his existence. He imagined he could carry with him the whole of the S.A., whereas in reality he could only count on his own group, addicted as they were to a common vice which had already made them extremely unpopular in the Party.

Hitler himself would not speak of plot or plotters. Roehm was his most intimate friend, the only man who addressed him as 'thou.' To his mind, simply and wholly concerned with his new Germany which he saw threatened by a plot, the thing was over, and to make further reference to it would be to accord it an importance which it did not deserve. Hitler had been profoundly moved. He looked well, but his eyes were quenched. "It was necessary," was all he would say of June 30.

Goebbels, on the other hand, said: "It was expedient," and Goering, supremely loyal to his Chief: "It was right."

Berlin had grown callous. A soap manufacturer said to me: "We are not nearly as much worried as the rest of Europe by a few executions. 'Clean up and have done with it' is the best thing from our point of view."

"The foreign Press," he went on, "have exaggerated matters. Frau Ernst did not kill herself. She had a nervous breakdown and is in a sanatorium. Alvensleben (the 'Mr. A' of the supposed French negotiations) is not dead. Last week his relatives visited him in a fortress for the celebration of his silver wedding."

He added: "See you, under the Republic there was daily fighting between Nazis and Socialists. One could not go out at night for fear of robbery and worse. Now, at least, we have order. So if we hear that somebody has been shot at the other side of Berlin, it does not greatly concern us."

Others were not so stoical. A professor who last year lectured on the rebirth of the German spirit, regretted in public that the Nazis used bullets instead of castor oil after the fashion of early Italian Fascism.

A washerwoman, whose husband was a member of the S.A., said: "It seems that the Leader is not so well supported as we imagined. One wonders who will be the next to go."

A shopkeeper, with the swastika in his buttonhole, remarked:

“It is not agreeable to be kept in ignorance of who is dead and who is alive.”

The Junkers were cautious in expressing their misgivings, but the majority of them regarded Nazi-ism with suspicion. They were afraid of losing political and social power together with their estates. They resented espionage and censored letters. Tapped telephones were irksome to people depending on what they regarded as the divine right of birth.

An important and unprejudiced member of this class, an ex-Minister, said to me: “So far, Hitler has been somewhat in the position of a Roosevelt struggling with an immense feudalism of industry and finance. Up to now, the forces of Right have been too strong for him, but at heart he is as sincerely Socialist as he is Nationalist. And being sincere, he must put into action—as soon as power gives him the opportunity—those Left-wing principles which his Party expect.”

So Germany, convinced that Hitler would get an enormous majority at the polls, waited with confidence or dismay for a programme in which it believed the accent would be on the Socialist aspect rather than the Nationalist. What it did not for one moment expect—five years ago—was a cruel and unnecessary world war caused by the senseless ambitions of its Leader.

V. HITLER IN POWER

THE FIRST TIME I HEARD HITLER SPEAK ABOUT WAR WAS IN his still small house on the heights above Berchtesgaden. He had been President for a year. The supreme power was his.

I have a recollection of a rather fussy man talking a great deal with his mouth stuffed full of cream buns. There was a very good-looking young man drinking coffee with a hillock of whipped cream on top of it. I think he was more or less official caricaturist to the Party. Like Hitler, he wore leather shorts and a Bavarian shirt. A stalwart fair girl, heavily built, came in with another plate of cakes. When nobody could eat any more, she sat down by the window and knitted a sock. Outside there was a narrow veranda and, from where I sat, a view of rounded green hill with a stiff patch of trees.

Hitler was hospitable as any anxious housewife. He kissed the hands of two German women who came in late and sat in silence while the husband of one of them talked earnestly about pending manœuvres. His greeting of them had a certain charm. He seemed more fluid and facile in this social setting than I had hitherto seen him. But when the conversation veered from the necessity of being prepared for national defence to the Führer's conception of what the German nation should eventually be, I had my first premonition of the Hitler of to-day.

For our host ceased suddenly to be a plump little man with expressive hands and too many gestures. He forgot everyone in the room except the officer to whom he spoke. His eyes hardened till they were like pebbles of dull agate.

After a time his fingers writhed on the arms of his chair. His voice became hoarse and it thickened as if his nose were blocked.

When I returned to my hotel, I wrote down a few notes, and from them I gather the substance of what Hitler said then was :

“ I’ve got to have every German-born or German-speaking family in the Reich. I don’t care what sacrifices I make to achieve this. I don’t want war. You can’t imagine any man who has suffered as I have would want to make such another sacrifice. But I shall train German youth to live and die for Germany. And if there is another war, it’ll be on a scale nobody has hitherto conceived.

“ It is utter nonsense, it is childish, it is wicked to talk of international law. There can be no law in war. It will be my duty to fight the next war in such a terrible manner that my enemies could not endure it.

“ It would be too horrible to continue. It would have to end. In the next war there will be no front line. The whole of Germany will fight and our enemies will be every human being who is against us.”

Long ago, when Africa was less travelled, I remember asking a French Governor of Darfur to explain his policy with regard to the dissident blacks in his charge. They were undoubtedly trying, but I was startled by the Administrator’s reply : “ That I can easily do, Madame—in one word, extermination.”

Apparently Hitler intended to apply the same policy with regard to more civilized enemies, if it came to another war. But he would not acknowledge there was much civilization east of his own frontier.

“ The Turks are about the best soldiers in the world because they don’t think,” he said. “ The French also are good. When their own soil is a battle-field they are sometimes inspired.

You British get better and better the longer the war lasts. If you are at it long enough, fighting becomes a habit with you. That is why, if I ever have to make war against you, I shall give you no time to get used to the idea. I shall strike too hard and quick for you to strip your cumbersome mummery of bureaucracy.

“Your Ministries and Trades Unions, your precedents and traditions, the muddles and delays and long-winded talks, all the foolish inefficiencies of democracy will lose the next war before your soldiers have a chance.”

I protested of course, but I doubt if Hitler listened. He has never been able to understand that there can be any opinion but his own. The most I’ve ever heard him say when envisaging a possible doubt is “I must be right,” then with more confidence, “of course I am right. There can be no other way.”

Unfortunately he has been right so often—from his own and the German point of view—that as the years pass he has come to believe himself infallible.

“I tell you there is nothing to choose between the soldiers of Roumania and Italy,” he repeated. “They are both equally bad. In terms of war they don’t count. They don’t exist.” He added: “It is more than ever to the credit of the Duce that he has made so fine a thing of Italy with so little good material!” In those days, undoubtedly, Hitler admired Benito Mussolini. Later, I imagine, his opinion changed.

“The Polish soldiers are also bad,” said the Führer. “I have no opinion of them.” It did not occur to him that his own opinion was not the only one. But that was the first time I had heard him talk in this strain of omniscience.

His speech, which might have been directed from a platform to a large audience, continued much as follows:

“Where German people live, that is Germany. So what you

have seen in Santa Caterina"—this in an aside to me, referring to my Brazilian journey—"is just as much the Reich as here in Bavaria."

There seemed to me no pause before the small man, insignificant in appearance, but either 'stuffed with words' or 'dynamic with vocalized spiritual force' according to one's own point of view, was describing the Germany of the future.

"I don't want to interfere with Britain. Let her keep her colonies. Let her continue to muddle along with her Empire, half of it already in upheaval. Let her slaughter good Arab stock for the sake of Jewish aliens in Palestine. Let her alternately coddle and oppress Indians in their own country. What do her mistakes matter to us? They may even be useful because they will keep her occupied. I don't want to interfere with France or England except in so far as the Ruhr and Alsace-Lorraine are concerned.

"I must have my proper German boundaries in the East. After that France can decay as she likes. Frenchmen will always die for their country, but not one of them will ever spend a penny for their so beloved land!"

The conversation went on and on. I said in my few halting words of German: "You won't get what you want without war," and thought of a Roumanian castle in Sinaija where Queen Sophie of Greece, widow of King Constantine, sister of the Kaiser, and mother of the present King George, poured out tea for my husband and myself. The scene was a small gallery which I remember as being excessively carved in Teutonic-Gothic fashion, with a good deal of red velvet in the background. The tea-urn was in a Balkanic temper and our hostess dealt firmly with it until it spluttered so much that my husband had to intervene. Then the exquisite lady, who was the picture of all that Queens ought to be—in trailing and unconsciously romantic black, very simple and

severe, with reasonable sized pearls in her ears and a diamond cross as her only other jewel—said: “I suppose Dictators can afford to make war. Kings can’t. That is where my brother made his mistake. He was not modern.”

Hitler prides himself on being superlatively modern. He certainly thinks far ahead of anything yet conceived. He will discuss a war of annihilation caused by bacteria used at the right—the most critical and therefore decisive—moment on civilian populations, or a war of suffocation caused by poison gas. He will speculate on the most successful of all modern warfare as he has carried it out—successive campaigns of disintegration by means of internal propaganda. But I have never heard him talk arrant nonsense. I have seen him choke over the repetition of the word Germany or Fatherland when his throat seems too full for speech. But the ideas, scientific or political, which I’ve heard him express are no more fantastic than certain aspects of Wellsian or Shavian philosophy. They are the final Germanic conception of a Utopia achieved by the most ruthless and brutal force. “I am not interested in the means, only in the end,” said Hitler.

“Obviously, for the sake of lasting peace and prosperity, there cannot be all these absurd small countries quarrelling among themselves, starving because of a customs post every hundred miles, totally or partially uncultured, without purpose or strength. . They cannot defend themselves in war. They cannot develop in peace. There is no one of them without an economic crisis. That is the legacy of Versailles. It was always ludicrously chaotic, now it is dangerous.

“There must be one rule in Europe, a rule of strength and certainty. I shall make a great Germany in the very centre of Europe, including all those smaller Germanies which are now under Austrian, Czech, Polish, Danish, and French rule. Beyond that, surrounding it and depending on it, there will be a number of subservient states, nominally ruling them-

selves but looking to Berlin for military protection, for economic prosperity, and for their foreign policy."

I am sure it was at this moment that I interrupted in a loud and probably frightened voice, stringing together ungrammatical sentences.

"You'll find the whole of Europe united against you."

I remember, after nearly four years, Hitler's look of surprise. He blinked and swallowed. Probably he had forgotten the component parts of his audience.

"Never!" he said in quite a different voice, shrewd, small, and ugly. "Each country will imagine it alone will escape. I shall not even need to destroy them one by one. I shall break them up inside. Selfishness and lack of foresight will prevent each one fighting until it is too late."

VI. LAST CONVERSATIONS WITH HITLER

THE NARROW, DUSTY LANE THROUGH THE HILLS OF BAVARIA changed into a wide motor-road. The wooden chalet with its chequered cloths, red-and-white or blue-and-white on which the young caricaturist used to draw, using the crumbs left after a meal for raised effects, and its stiff little bunches of flowers stuck into mugs, gave place to the big modern house with sheets of windows looking out to the mountains. Hitler changed too, or perhaps he only went on evolving on an inevitable pattern.

Mein Kampf no doubt indicated the end to which he would come, but when I first met him I am sure he had forgotten a lot of the things he had written in that book. After all, the generality of authors do not re-read their works, however important they may seem at the time of conception. I could not quote a sentence now from the laborious, whole-hearted—and, I insist, well-informed!—appeals I made from Palestine or Syria in 1919 and 1920 on behalf of Arab unity and independence. I doubt if Kaiserling could repeat a paragraph from his alternately magnificent and confused conception of Brazilian slime-giving primogeniture to civilization. There were years—or perhaps only months—I believe, when Hitler really was primarily concerned with a spiritual restoration of Germany. He knew, of course, that only tremendous recrudescence of force could bring about what he wanted. For only a militarily strong Germany could feel assured and successful.

“To get anything by force, you must be very strong indeed. To get anything without force, you must be stronger still,” is a typical saying of Hitler’s. He has many such

effective sentences which he repeats, for words give him great pleasure.

In another book,¹ I wrote that the truth has never meant anything to him. He has always used words to produce an agreeable or suitable or necessary effect. With the great masses of words he pours out in public or to acquaintances outside his small intimate circle, *in which I have never been included*, he does not mean to express facts.

His, curiously enough, is the Latin gift of oratory which you see at its height in South America. In Argentina I once attended a political meeting with an enthusiastic young student of philosophy. After an hour, orator and audience were equally intoxicated by eloquence. As we left, I asked my companion if he could explain the trend of an argument which had proved too much for my Spanish.

“Oh, no !” he said, with a blank, drugged look, “I didn’t understand anything—but what words ! What marvellous, what incomparable words !”

Hitler is an orator with more conscious intention. Like the best actor, he knows exactly how to appeal, but it is ALWAYS acting. He once walked with me through meadows full of flowers on the way to Berchtesgaden. Flaxen-headed children were making balls of yellow blooms. Hitler, sincere in his passion for organization, made what can only be described as a clucking noise. Like a hen, he descended among the children : “That is not right. That is waste. You should arrange the flowers so”—his sensitive, effective hands busied themselves rapidly with the heads of field flowers. The result was much better. Then he began to talk to the children, at first sensibly about their school and families. Imperceptibly his voice rose. It became a lecture on youth in the ranks, on the mission of youth to labour and to die, on unquestioning obedience, and on his own right to dispose of youth for

¹ *A Unicorn in the Bahamas.* (Jenkins.)

Germany. The children were far too small to understand and most of them were girls!

Shortly afterwards, a labour battalion passed. The young men looked hot, shining, and healthy. Some of them were splendidly sunburned, some most undecoratively peeling. They saluted their Führer and Hitler let his emotion have full play. When they had passed, he turned to me in a blaze of sentimentality and said :

“Look at the husbands I am giving to German maidens. Could you resist such gorgeous youths ? ”

Always it seems to me Hitler is cramped by his dual nature. I don’t think he is fundamentally cruel. On the contrary he is intensely emotional and, on occasions, sentimental to the point of hysteria. Once in the Chancellery at Berlin he rushed to the telephone, rang up his favourite café in Munich, demanded the waitress who always attended him, and in the most homely fashion asked what the weather was like down there. Afterwards he gave me a warm account of the simple, wholesome pleasures—the beer and the talks—he had shared with his fellow-working-men during years of poverty in Munich. What his words meant to him I do not know—probably just a pretty design—but they would surely have impressed any ordinary listener with Hitler’s ‘*Gemüthlichkeit*.’ Yet it is this very feeling, the home and family sense of Germany, which he had laboured to destroy with all that is independent in religion, arts, and the fundamental organization of life.

“I will not have a Christian in my bodyguard,” said the Führer. “If a man has any other religion but that which I am creating out of German racial instincts, his loyalty is divided. There is nothing more important than Germany. If a man does not agree with me, he should take his own life. He is no more use to Germany.”

Year after year Hitler, with one success after another, has become more certain that his is a world mission. At first

he wanted to re-create Germany. He saw himself as a Frederick the Great and unfortunately he saw the narrow-minded, conceited, and ill-informed Ribbentrop, who is completely without imagination, as a Bismarck.

In the last eight months he has gone much further. There has been too much success. The summer before last—1938—he was already talking of his mission on the other side of the Atlantic. “America has no stability. Her structure is wrong. There is a gorged capitalist class already rotting and a serf population ruled by gunmen. The United States could never make a war. I could paralyse their industry with the voices of their own agitators. There is no democracy over there. It is a welter of conflicting interests, every one of them corrupt. Only my German code could bring organization and unity to such unprincipled disruption.”

The last time I saw Hitler, he had ceased to think of the rest of Europe at all. To his mind there was neither courage nor culture in any country but his own. Europe would have to fall in with his wishes. If it did not it would cease to exist. I don't think—in 1938—he wanted war with England, but I am sure he was no longer afraid of it. I never heard Hitler boast of secret weapons. It was Goering who did that.

Hitler used to say: “There is no weapon which could ever be invented to take the place of brave men, and it is men—not armaments—who will win the next war.” He also said:

“It may be we shall invent new weapons and we shall use them all. They will not be obvious like your Fleet. That is altogether out of date. The next war will be invisible—in the clouds, under the sea, in the enemy's food, in his mind, continuously on the wireless, by his own fireside, in the middle of his own cities. There will be destruction in his factories, in his barracks, in his warehouses, his shops, and his home. He will lose his meals and his money and his children at school. He will not have a remnant of courage left. Then we

shall strike. With one blow after another, unparalleled in fearfulness, we shall strike down and obliterate. There will be nothing left for which the enemy can fight."

I wrote down this speech as soon as I was alone, because it was the first time I had heard Hitler completely unbalanced.

I thought—in 1938—he was finding it hard to make up his mind and harder still to decide whose advice, if any, to take. But although he showed signs of nerves and said he was sleeping badly, I had never seen him in an ungoverned temper. So I came to the conclusion that, sick in mind, divided between disgust and pride, he was—with a terrific effort—whipping himself up to a point where he could consider himself a Cæsar and a Messiah combined.

For years he had denied what he could not bear to believe. When I brought him accurate information about atrocities in prison or concentration camps, he would say : "It isn't like that. It can't be like that."

He must have known that it was 'like that,' but he would not acknowledge it. Of course, his friends and supporters hide from him a great deal that they do. Probably Hitler does not know the full extent of the tyranny enforced in his name. But there is nothing now he would not do to implement his plans. For years he would have said anything, promised anything, and signed anything to ease his own way, but that way is also what he believes best in the end—distant end—for Germany. Now he is completely ruthless. He has no sense of human pity. But he is far from a madman. He does not intend to lose a German life unless it is necessary. As long as possible he will play for stalemate. If he fails, he may spend a million lives on a single fruitful attack, but always he has said : "If there is another war, I shall force my enemies to do the attacking."

Here are some notes I made of my last meeting with Hitler : Sitting by a wood fire which often smoked, Hitler talked,

in Berchtesgaden, of war, first with the horror of a soldier seared by gas blindness, then as a crucible through which man must pass.

Year after year he had become more and more convinced in his own one-track mind that England would never fight.

When he first came into power, Hitler's greatest desire was an alliance with Britain. He made no secret of the fact. He used to say and indeed to show that he liked us and admired our history and the way we fought from '14 to '18.

But during my later visits he said : "I cannot understand you English. I shall never understand you. In the days when you were a great Power you put the nation before the individual. Now you are sick of a disease called individualism. You can't go on for ever talking and arguing and doing nothing at all. Your politics are play-acting on the day of Judgment."

The following year he said with sympathy and despair : "What mistakes you've made, nothing but mistakes since the War, when you were great—and what you have lost by them !

"Japan, Italy, Eastern Europe, the Arabs, all your friends are gone and for no reason ! "

Nowadays neither Hitler nor any of the young men who surround him—Toni Scharf, who used to draw lightning caricatures on the red-bordered tablecloth and napkins, Rohlff Hoffman, earnest young propagandist from the Brown House, married to a fair-headed, pale girl from Manchester, the solid Schiller, obstinate and talkative—would believe that in any circumstances would we go to war.

"It's against your nature and habit of mind," insisted Hitler. "For twenty years you've steeped yourselves in the habits of peace. Luxury, ease, pleasure, free speech, free wages, free living—that is what you must have. Life is easy for you. You don't want to die."

And again : "It is not possible for you to fight. You cannot change your nature overnight. War is not made by

politics. It is the deep need and conviction of a people. How can you suddenly become disciplined and patriotic?"

But the thing he said which most impressed me was: "War is not a matter of dying for your country. It means living year after year so that you may know how so to die."

The conversation in the chalet set among fields and woods was not always of politics, for Hitler likes flowers and children. We used to go out to pick the first and talk to the second.

There were generally a few tow-headed youngsters waiting to see the Führer and to thrust sticky bunches of wild flowers into his hand.

Once I repeated my question: "What are you going to do for the women of Germany? For you are taking away their religion and you are going to send their sons to war."

Hitler retorted, with that peculiarly fugitive smile that is gone before you have time to appreciate its charm: "What can any man do for a woman?"

So far as I know the Führer has never been in love. I've never seen him smoke or drink.

At Berchtesgaden he appeared to sleep about four hours a night, generally after listening to Wagner played for a long time by his favourite musician.

In music and in the sight of magnificent Aryan youth, I imagine he finds his greatest stimulus.

The only compliment I've ever heard him pay to a woman—Unity Mitford—was to say, in her absence, that she was a splendid specimen of Aryan beauty.

I suppose the man has become more and more unbalanced, if only because for years he has believed that he cannot die until his mission is accomplished.

For this reason, perhaps, he used to be without fear.

As Chancellor, he walked alone at night in Berlin and also in Bavaria, where his personal popularity was at variance with the strong feeling roused in the minds of devout Catholics, to whom the persecuted Cardinal Innitzer has always been a

saint. In more recent years he has become much more nervous. Sometimes I think he is afraid—but of what I do not know.

I said to him once that, like Napoleon, he would find defeat *in* Russia, although not *by* the Russians.

Hardly I added that he was the worst psychologist in the world, with a genius for making mistakes.

“Perhaps you can do without the Jews,” I continued hurriedly, “although you need their brains in art, science, and trade. You can do without the good opinion of Europe, although lots of my friends in Germany don’t like feeling outcasts. But you can’t do without the Church, Catholic or Protestant.”

Hitler looked, as he often does, a little puzzled. He said: “There must be a German Church. Religion cannot be international.”

As Mussolini refused, at one time, to believe in God—for he once said to me: “I couldn’t acknowledge anyone so much greater than myself”—so Hitler quite honestly cannot believe in anything greater or more important than Germany.

About Russia he said: “There is no truth there and nothing solid.”

When I tried to quote Stalin and Voroshilov, whom I’d met in Moscow, the German Führer fidgeted.

He finds it difficult to sit still and listen to something with which he disagrees.

“If there is anything good in Russia, it is folly to talk about it—worse than folly, a treachery!”

On my last visit I showed him some articles I had written about a journey from the Afghan frontier to Moscow. When he had read them he said:

“I don’t believe, I’ll never believe that Bolshevism can do any good at all. It is the final corruption. In the end I shall destroy it. That will be my last and worst fight. If I do not destroy Bolshevism, Germany herself will perish.

“But I shall utterly put an end to the Soviets. Then there will be peace and my new law in Europe.”

TWO

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*GLIMPSES OF
GOERING AND GOEBBELS*

GLIMPSES OF GOERING AND GOEBBELS

“I CANNOT UNDERSTAND,” SAID HERMANN GOERING, “WHY you insist on talking of Germany and the Nazis as if there was any difference between them. I tell you frankly you are just believing what you wish, but that does not make it true. Among the old and useless we may still have some opponents, but the youth and strength of Germany is united behind us. When you talk of the Nazis you mean all that is effective in the Reich to-day.”

The Field-Marshal of course does a certain amount of wishful thinking himself. But he is honest about it, for he says in public: “I am not concerned with many different sides. I know only two—National Socialists and their enemies. It is my duty to see that the latter disappear.”

Where Hitler vacillates because he is emotional and can never wholly separate sentiment and expediency, Goering goes hard ahead. “Shoot first,” he told his police, “shoot last. Shoot all the time! If you make a mistake don’t talk about it.” To me he once said: “If you’d been shot at as much as I have, you’d know there are occasions when it is necessary to shoot someone—better the wrong man than nobody at all!”

To my mind, Goering is a cheerful savage. I first met him in Hitler’s house near Berchtesgaden. In 1933 he was still inclined to take drugs. His Swedish wife, born Baroness Karin Von Fock, whom he adored and on whom he depended for consolation and encouragement, had died two years ago.

He talked of her with despair. "I shall never forget——" he said. "How could a man forget his life?"

Alternating between fits of intense depression when he would sit hunched up in a chair speechless and immobile and spasms of feeling 'on top of the world,' when he would rage about the chalet planning Hitler's aggrandisement and the wholesale destruction of his enemies, Goering was far from being an ideal house-fellow!

I thought he was without fear or pity. An enormous man with an intermittent appetite, he sometimes ate sufficient for three ordinary people, while, at others, he pushed his heaped plates aside and brooded over the tablecloth. In those days nobody could have been more variable. His moments of cheerfulness were startling in contrast to the gloom in which he subsequently immured himself as if in a windowless cell.

Hitler put up with him. Hitler was patient and understanding. "In time he will recover himself," said the Reich's Chancellor, taking no notice of his friend and follower's furies. In those days Goering had the moods and the nerves. Hitler was quiet, peaceable, and detached, except when he had to address an audience. Then he suited his manner to his words. He has always been an excellent actor.

Goering is more natural. He is alternately a good-natured, a heroic, and a ruthless brute. It was he who re-established the old German punishment "in keeping," he said, "with primitive and honest needs," of death on the block. With pride, he shows an enormous executioner's axe hanging on a wall in his own study. He looks at it when he writes. As a symbol it is as interesting to him as the portrait of Napoleon on another wall.

The second man in Germany has no regard for life—his own or other people's. In prisons and concentration camps, the maimed, the beaten, and the sick are often convinced that Hitler does not know of their sufferings. "This is Goering's

work," they say. It is now taken for granted that Hermann's own men set fire to the Reichstag, but whether the plot to discredit German Communists by charging them with the holocaust originated in the then Prime Minister's brain, few can know.

Goering enjoys acting on a large scale, and with success, prosperity, a secured position, and a happy second marriage to the actress Emmy Sonnemann, he has regained his health. In recent years he has been master of himself—and of as much wealth as he chose to exact from Germany—but never of Hitler. When foreigners say he is the active force behind the Führer's ideas, I doubt it, for Goering repeats to everyone such phrases as 'we are never never allowed to make a decision. We cannot even talk. We have no more voice in the Führer's plans than the stones on which we stand. Often we do not know them until the last moment. It is Hitler and Hitler alone who decides.'

The Goering of recent years has, it appears, no nerves. Loyal to his leader, believing that 'German law is the will of the Führer,' he stops at nothing to administer that law. "My bullets are more effective than any other propaganda," he boasts, but in such a good-humoured fashion and with such a broad smile that one forgets he is talking of death.

A great deal has been written of Goering's uniforms and medals, his wife's jewels and admirably proportioned shoulders, the charms of his small, delicious daughter called after Edda Ciano, and the magnificence of the Minister-Field-Marshal's new possessions. Because he is a huge eater, a lover of champagne and beer, of tapestries with vast, nude figures sprawling across them, of marble and gilding and many-pronged candelabra reminiscent of a cathedral, because he would much rather shoot animals—or men—than attend a conference, there is an idea that he is a tremendous good fellow, bluff, hearty, and honest. He may be, but he is also

entirely ruthless. Where Hitler hesitates, he condemns. The Germany of Goering would be ruled by brute force without any subtlety at all. I cannot believe that this alternative dictator could discuss war with the intelligence of Hitler. He said to me not long ago, with his broad appealing smile : " We don't really want to fight you. There is no reason for us to have a war, but if you want one we are ready for you. We've got a weapon that will sink your whole fleet. Your blockade will do us no harm at all. What are you thinking about ? It's all nonsense. You can effectively blockade about 150 miles out of our 3000 miles of frontier. You can close the Western land front, but the Balkans and Russia, Italy and Scandinavia will supply us with all we need." He laughed as if he were contemplating a great game. " Denmark will be as good as a German province. She was our granary in the last war and she'll serve the same purpose again. Holland and Belgium will be of more use to us than the North Sea to you ! Come on now, acknowledge there'll be too many holes in your blockade. In fact it'll be all holes. It couldn't frighten a mouse ! "

Goering's weakness is that he underestimates his enemies. For years he has had overwhelming force on his side. Anyone who interfered with him has been hit on the head or shot. He has become used to the immediate disappearance of rivals and opponents. Before they can worry him they are gone ! But he does not suffer from the doubts and the indecisions of Hitler. He has no subtlety of imagination. Therefore he is not easily defeated. I can imagine Hitler sharing the defeatism which between 1918 and 1933 was a fundamental German characteristic. Temporarily National Socialism has obliterated it, but a succession of military disasters might destroy the confidence with which Teutonic youth now faces a future of isolation. Hitler would always be capable of throwing in his hand in a moment of nervous dismay. He might not be able

to face repetitive disaster. Goering is more solid. I don't think he is more of a bully than his average fellow-countryman. He stamps out human life as if it were a matter of crushing beetles, but he does not enjoy prolonged torture. So he has nothing in common with the splendid Borgia to whom he has been compared. He is just a very hard worker, a good organizer, a brave man with an immense zest for living, but he has neither genius nor wide understanding. With force, laughter, and charm, he has won the hearts of ordinary German people. Soldiers and working men like him because he is fat and so they imagine him kind, because he walks fast and hatless, with a smile stretching his nice fair skin, so they feel he is just like themselves only more energetic! "He'll get anything done," they say. "He's a good fellow—a sportsman—we can trust him!"

Certainly he has one very attractive quality. He loves having a good time and wants to share it with his friends. He has an enormous zest for living, but he can't understand anyone preferring another pattern to his own. "You don't want to talk any more! Come out!" How often have I heard him say that, and if 'coming out' means also some robust physical exercise such as shooting or ski-ing, playing tennis, marching at the head of noisy, applauding comrades—all the better! I once asked Goering if he was afraid of anything or anybody. He said: "No," but Hitler teased him: "That's not so. You are as terrified of Himmler as if you were a little boy facing a ghost!" Goering shrugged large shoulders and looked uncomfortable.

He has had a more varied life than most of the Nazi leaders. He has travelled in more countries and made more friends outside the Party. The fourth child of a doctor, who was at one time first Commissioner in the German Protectorate of South-West Africa, he was born in 1893 and spent much of his childhood in a mediæval castle in Franconia. Sent to the

village school, he proved altogether too much for it. "School bored and irritated me," he said. "I hated lessons. I always ran away from them. I couldn't tell you how many schools I went to—none of them lasted long. All I wanted was to be a soldier, and I wasn't satisfied till I got to the Military Academy. Then I settled down." He served with the 112th Prinz Wilhelm Infantry Regiment in Alsace-Lorraine, but the War turned him into a pilot. He won the Iron Cross—first class—in the air, and the same year (1915) was shot down by an Englishman. His plane landed behind the German lines and Goering spent the next four months in hospital. Back he went—to the air—as soon as he could evade the doctors whom he found as annoying as schoolmasters. In 1917 he shot down his twentieth enemy plane, received his country's highest award for valour, the '*Pour le Mérite*' which equals our V.C., and, after Richthofen's gallant death in 1918, he achieved what must have been the ambition of every German airman. As Commander of the famous 'Circus of Death,' which for so long dominated the Western Front, he finished the War which he will never agree that Germany lost. "Our army was undefeatable then as now," he insists. "We were betrayed by politicians, but that won't happen again. We soldiers used to know nothing except how to fight. Now we've learned a lot more. Germany is our profession. We can work and plan for it as well as fight."

In the pacific and democratic Germany of the immediate post-War years, when civilians, sick of war, needing only a little encouragement to be good internationalists as well as good workers, were tearing the epaulettes from officers' shoulders, there was no place for Goering. He went to Sweden and earned not too good a living, first as a commercial pilot, then as a mechanic, and finally in a shop. "I was a failure in everything," he says, "until I met Karin." She must have been intelligent and kind, but the portraits and

the photographs in front of which Emmy Sonnermann's comparatively new husband burns candles and sets stiff bunches of flowers in his immense new country house, with a dining-room like a City Banqueting Hall, do not show her as beautiful. Without her Goering would probably have remained an exile and obscure. She told him he must go back to his own country and get a job. Her money helped to establish the still slender young man among the landed interests of Bavaria, but her ambition raced ahead of her husband's. Apparently it was she who sent the air-ace into politics. He met Hitler at a meeting in Munich, and talked to him at great length in a smoke-cloud over tankards of beer which Adolf would not drink. Next day he joined the Party. To it he was of immediate use, for he had influential friends among business men and land-owners. He had a backing in the army and sufficient courage to use it.

But Hitler insisted on the Munich *putsch*—one of his few mistakes. With their leader in prison writing *Mein Kampf*—a record of bitterness, ambition, and a limited knowledge of the world, which has been altered again and again as the author changes his politics—the Party came near to disintegration.

Goering travelled in neighbouring Europe. From Czechoslovakia he went to the then free city of Danzig, to Poland which he considered 'old-fashioned, poverty-ridden, and mismanaged.' Six great families owned most of the country. The National Socialist of Hitler's making preferred Sweden, where working men already had considerable voice in the government.

Early in 1925 he was taking morphia. By the end of the year he was a 'mental case' in a sanatorium. A few months later a court declared him a morphine addict, unfit for the guardianship of his stepchild. But as soon as Hitler was released, his devoted lieutenant seems to have acquired a new

lease of life and considerable stores of common sense. For back in Munich and—at the instigation of a Jew¹—appointed head of a motor-works, he soon made contact with large industrial concerns specializing in aircraft and machinery.

The next step in his career was his appointment as one of the first twelve Nazi delegates to the Reichstag. One of his first speeches in the historic building which he eventually destroyed began with the words: 'Why is there no Air Ministry?' Subsequently, while European diplomats laughed at 'Hermann's antics,' he organized with secrecy and amazing speed the 'Air Sports League.' It became the German Air Force. So while British Generals and Ramsay MacDonald's Socialists urged co-operation with Germany and mutual agreement with regard to limitation of armaments, and our Foreign Office, following the lead of France, shivered at the thought of repairing the damages wrought by exhausted Ministers at Versailles, Goering was creating the air supremacy which might be Germany's most effective weapon.

Since then, Goering has been more or less everything, including special envoy to Italy, with the difficult mission of convincing the Pope that National Socialism is—in his own words—"not in the least anti-Catholic, but the only certain defence against Bolshevism." While Hitler used to talk of the Soviet with the horror of an Ignatius Loyola fulminating against heresy, Goering spoke with all the force and indignation of the 'HAVES' afraid that security may be impaired by the 'HAVE-NOTS.'

What part the Minister-Marshall played in the disgrace of Bruning, Germany's last sound constitutional Chancellor, is uncertain. The men quarrelled. Goering is reported to have exclaimed: "I don't care about your views. I don't care about justice. I am going to destroy all that is not National Socialism."

¹ Eduard Milch,

For this he organized the Secret Police, gave their leadership to Himmler, and thus created a Frankenstein of whom to-day he is at least uncertain.

Undoubtedly the executions of June, 1934, subsequent to Roehm's destruction, were largely planned and carried out by Goering. As a forest fire, he raged through East Prussia. When he left he had not an enemy left! After that, his wedding—to Emmy Sonnemann—was a national festival. He went from power to power, organizing the Four Year Plan and invested with Dictatorial powers over German industry. It was in 1937 he made his famous remark: "If we have to choose between butter and guns—we choose guns."

In the only conversation between Dr. Goebbels and Goering at which I have been present, the large, enormously energetic, ruthless, cheerful man who looks the epitome of hearty good-humour told the short, shrivelled, bitter, brilliant, and infinitely cleverer man: "We'll win the next war with my guns and my planes, not with your words. Speeches are no good when it comes to war. You can cut them out. Mines talk all right. So do heavy shells—"

Goebbels, who always looks crushed and compressed, interrupted: "You wouldn't have to fight at all if I had my way. I could win any number of wars for you with no losses but suicides on the other side!" To me he said: "You can make a man believe anything if you tell it him in the right way. And a nation is only so many men with a mind which—in the mass—can be more easily influenced." He criticized with a bitterness amounting to hatred what he called 'the childish lies' of our politicians. But the word 'lie' to Goebbels means anything which he has not thought of himself.

I only met this brilliant propagandist twice. The first time was at a surprising dinner-party in Berlin. It was given by a foreign journalist. There were several tables scattered through

the different rooms of the flat. Beside me on a long, cushioned seat, backed against the wall, sat Dr. Goebbels, then at the beginning of his wizardry with microphone and printing-press. Beyond him was our host's White Russian mistress and an author who bleated : "I wrote one novel in favour of post-War Germany—I got the material during the occupation of the Rhineland. Now I don't know what to do ! I can't very well turn round and write against them ? "

"Why not, if you feel like it ?" said the unmarried daughter of an Ambassador. She was modern and unmoved, even when Dr. Goebbels assured us that we belonged to the stupidest race in the world.

"You only say that because we've got everything you want," she said, between mouthfuls of richly sauced meat cooked with fruit.

"You haven't got a soldier left," retorted the fighter with words—more and more words, written, printed, repeated, whispered, shouted, words improved, altered, invented.

"It doesn't take us nearly so long as you to make soldiers," I suggested. "You see, we are soldiers—by habit of centuries and by free will—the instant there's a question of war—" I didn't get any further, for Goebbels spluttered as he inveighed against the blind conceit of England.

"You are a good hater," I said, with my nose practically in the cream sauce. It was the best I had ever tasted.

Suddenly the thin man, wrenched and twisted by the violence of his ideas, so that at times one really imagines he looks as he speaks or writes for public consumption, smiled and said with amusement : "That's my trade. Hatred. It takes you a long way further than any other emotion !" His eyes were shrewd. I should not think they miss much. He said : "I'm not an idealist. I'm not concerned with theories. I use the tools I know to put National Socialism across and it's going big !"

A couple of years later, when I argued with him on the

porch of Goering's villa at Obersalzburg, he said: "You can turn out people any shape you like, but it's easier to influence men than women. Kitchens and nurseries are a pretty solid background. Get men away from women and you can make them into machines. They won't think and they'll feel exactly the way you want. But you mustn't let them know it!"

For me, Dr. Goebbels remains a thin, dark flame burning itself out in a laboratory. He is an artificial product. The hospitable Goering, who always wants to give his friends lots of good food to eat, lots of birds and animals to kill, is a bonfire—large, lavish, and agreeable, unless it gets out of control.

THREE

★

STALIN

I. STALIN AT THE KREMLIN

WHEN I FIRST WENT TO NORTHERN RUSSIA IN THE SPRING of the British engineers' trial I headed the list of what I wanted to see with 'Stalin.' And Stalin happened to me by accident.

In search of local colour, I spent hours in the People's Courts. Without reserve I admired the justice meted out to artisans and peasants by men and women of their own kind temporarily selected as judges. It was one of these, a solid workman with a mat of coarse black hair and broken front teeth, knowing little of law, but having a great deal of common sense, who took me to a party in a four-roomed flat.

The inadequate space was crowded with restless young people who talked inordinately, smoked without ceasing, and drank glasses of weak tea.

The windows had been hermetically sealed for the winter and the atmosphere was as thick as a London fog. There were only four chairs, so the guests sat on tables, on beds, and on a washhand-stand between cracked basin and jugs.

Among them was a young woman in a crumpled blouse straining away from a black skirt shiny with wear. She was pale. Wisps of hair fell around her neck. Her eyes were alert. She had interesting hands. I watched their capable and effective movements while she talked, and I thought it just possible that their owner possessed what is sadly lacking in Soviet Russia—a sense of humour.

"That is Stalin's wife," said the judge, and he spoke to her with good-tempered familiarity. Obviously they discussed me and my chances of seeing Stalin.

"He would not give you an interview," explained the judge, "but you might meet—"

By the early morning I felt I had made a lot of friends and I had talked to the wife of Stalin in scraps of several languages. She had been a factory worker and a teacher. We had a lot in common.

"It will be arranged," she said when we parted.

But the arrangements were not very effective, for the first time the judge called for me we got no further than the door of the barrack-like offices in the Kremlin. In spite of protestations and arguments nobody would admit having heard of us.

More parties in stifling rooms smelling of cabbage and sweat. An infinity of conversation.

Once again the judge came to fetch me, and this time he handed me over to an officer who conducted me, with many pauses for explanation to men in uniform or in the clothes habitually connected with street sweepers, to an office where the arbiter of 120 millions sat behind a large, worn, and stained desk.

So for the first time I saw Stalin—square, block-shouldered, unsmiling, deeply grooved lines running from nostrils to mouth, a nose ending bluntly, a heavy, dark moustache, narrow eyes that blinked, hair like strong matting, a squareness of face, and a buttoned-up-tight appearance emphasized I suppose by the sort of khaki tunic he was wearing, fastened close round the throat and patched with serviceable pockets.

Stalin sat with his back to the light and would only talk in Russian through an interpreter. He never really looked at me. He drew slowly and with difficulty meaningless scrawls on the dirty blotting-paper. Only when I spoke of Dictators did the heavy, square-cut man show interest. He explained that he was not and never could be a Dictator.

After emphasizing his position which, he insisted, might

be compared to that of the President of a Ministerial Council, he said : "I am just carrying on the work of Lenin. There must be no pause or hesitation, just patience."

Whenever I spoke of Russia Stalin corrected me.

"I am working for the people, not for Russia," he said. And on another occasion : "I am not interested in Russia, only in the world."

It happened that a year previously I had been on the tragic Persian-Armenian frontier during the persecution of the Kulaks, those moneyed peasants and thrifty farmers who had been driven at the point of Red guns and bayonets into the blood-stained waters of the Aras River to swim across into Azerbaijan or to drown.

I spoke of this horrible holocaust and of the millions who had died of starvation during the 'cotton offensive' in Central Asia, when ignorant peasants were ordered to grow material for export instead of the food on which they lived.

Stalin remained unmoved. He asked : "How many died in the Great War?"

It was the interpreter, I think, who supplied the figure of 7,500,000.

I agreed and Stalin repeated : "Over 7,500,000 deaths for no purpose at all. Then you must acknowledge that our losses are small, because your war ended in chaos while we are engaged in a work which will benefit the whole of humanity."

Again and again he spoke of the future, clumsily and without imagination as a peasant might speak of next year's harvest. I felt he had difficulty in finding words.

He said : "You cannot judge a new civilization by ten or twenty years. We are creating a pattern for all the ages that are to come. The civilization of the future will be based on what we are doing to-day, but nothing is finished or permanent."

I spoke of the secret police and their midnight arrests,

the total disappearance of suspects, and the terror under which a number of harmless people lived.

"It has always been so in Russia," said Stalin, and that was one of the very few times I heard him use the word 'Russia' instead of the habitual 'Soviet.' He continued: "Our critics never take the trouble to distinguish between what is essentially Bolshevik and what is naturally Slavonic."

Occasionally among the commonplace replies, the slow searching for speech, Stalin made other such apposite remarks.

With no reason for making notes I cannot reproduce many of his sentences verbatim, but I do remember one because I felt it ought to have been accompanied by a smile. Yet it was uttered with complete gravity.

"Between the Siberian steppes and the hot valleys in the Caucasus we can grow *everything* except cocoa. Do you think that any intelligent nation would go to war to change the national drink from tea to cocoa?"

There is the answer of Soviet Russia to a question which democracies are always asking.

I remember at that first meeting when Stalin spoke of a workers' world stretching from the Atlantic to the confines of India and China, I pressed him as to how this could be accomplished without war. He repeated that never under any circumstances would the Soviet Republics make a war of aggression.

He said something like this—when I spoke of the Third International: "It is no business of Bolsheviks to make war for any national purpose. It is their work to watch events in capitalist countries and to use all the influences at their command when conditions justify interference on behalf of the workers."

Subversive influences, yes—arms, ammunition, volunteers, adventurers, soldiers of fortune may pour into disrupted countries, spreading the curious new religion with Lenin as

its saviour, commissars as its apostles, and the secret police as its inquisition, but the only time Stalin really warmed into eloquence was at the thought of invasion.

“ We have not forgotten the time when five foreign armies trod our soil,” he said. “ Never again will there be such corruption of mother earth. I tell you, the very threat would mean unity! Every man, woman, and child, even those ignorant and old-fashioned whom you’ve seen in the churches, would fling themselves into the trenches—and this time they would be armed.”

Here is an indication of the fear with which every Bolshevik leader whom I have met envisages what he imagines to be the inevitable future.

“ How could anyone invade Russia ? ” I asked Stalin. “ It is much too large.” I thought of some vast smothering force as overwhelming to invasion as the rug under which South American Indians stamp the life out of a tarantula. Stalin’s eyes contracted still further. I could imagine them red and glowing. He said : “ There will be attempts at coercion and they will fail if we have sufficient war material. Men are unimportant. They are always unreliable. I must replace them with machines. Only on mechanical strength can we safely rely.”

Later he assured me categorically that the ‘ capitalist countries ’ were ‘ jealous of Russia’s prosperity.’ “ At any moment, he said, “ they may feel themselves strong enough to attack us.” And he repeated several times : “ The only thing for which France, England, Germany, and America would unite would be the destruction of the Soviet.”

It seemed to me even then, in 1934, that Stalin lived familiarly with a dozen different fears. In Moscow, among his closest adherents, I had heard him called ‘ the master of wisdom,’ ‘ the world’s best son,’ ‘ the greatest mechanic of revolution,’ and ‘ the most remarkable man on this or any

planet.' But among the terrified peasants his name was execrated. In the universities the new generation, critical and censorious, wished for his death and, when enough Vodka had been drunk, plotted its manner.

Born in 1879 of Georgian peasant stock, a member of the Bolshevik Party since 1898, constantly imprisoned under the Tsars, six times deported to Siberia, editor, author, political agitator, revolutionary by habit of mind as well as necessity, organizer of party machinery, Stalin was never really a soldier. He has no military instincts. He is a master of intrigue, capable of betraying his best friends, but not, I think, the Cause by which—although terribly changed since the days of Lenin—he is alternately inspired and oppressed. He has been a murderer both in the private and official sense. His personal fears are encouraged by the army of spies he employs to guard him from his intimates more than from the public to whom he is an enigma.

Hatred, awe, and bewilderment surround him, with some admiration on the part of brutes or those who appreciate success. But beyond all the ordinary terrors of a Slavonic dictator born of the people and forced to deprive the people of all they most need in order to create the Soviet machine, Stalin, to my mind, suffers from a persecution complex due to constant terror of invasion.

"We have a great deal of space," he once said, "but no strength." Then he corrected himself: "At least—not yet ENOUGH strength."

I asked him how soon the Russian workers would be allowed to live more normally, buying small comforts instead of busts of Lenin, saving if they chose, and talking, privately or publicly, in ordinary voices about whatever concerned them most. Stalin answered: "When we are safe from foreign hostility. But it will be a long time before we are safe. There is not a country which does not want something that we have.

Germany is our worst enemy. She needs our mines and our grain. She looks upon us as savages and she would like to make us work for her as serfs ! ”

There was a long pause. Stalin said something which was not interpreted to me. Then a grey-faced man pushed head and shoulders into the room and, with his body still in the passage outside, carried on an awkward conversation with the Dictator. Stalin appeared to be completely uninterested. He still sat with shoulders a trifle hunched, speaking slowly, looking at nobody. When the door shut behind the new-comer, he continued as if there had been no interruption. “ We are surrounded by enemies. Germany would close the Baltic to us. England would march through Persia to seize our oil-fields at Baku. Japan wants our Siberian ore. How can the Soviet Republics live as if they were at peace ? We are already a continent, but we are not yet sure of our defences. When every man is armed and can use a rifle, when our frontiers are walled with machine-guns, then you will be able to do nothing against our defences.”

Always—without exception—Stalin spoke as if Russia were a victim of European persecution, but never as if she were a part of Europe. Genuinely, I think, he saw her as a country which had been overrun by foreign armies and was still in danger. “ We have no friends,” he said in a tone of heavy acceptance. But as I was leaving he told me : “ Make no mistake, soon we shall be so strong nobody will be able to hurt us. In ten years, less perhaps, we shall be the strongest power in the world.”

II. STALIN AT HOME

DURING THE DAYS WHICH FOLLOWED THIS MEETING CHARGED with silences and reservations, I saw a certain amount of Stalin's wife. Together we visited a number of places. But it was eventually through my real friendship with a trade union lawyer, a strong, blowsy, rather magnificent young woman, that I was invited to the suburban dwelling where the wife of Stalin lived in a perpetual smell of cabbage-soup, strong soap, moudering papers, and stale water flavoured with tea.

It was half-villa, half-cottage, small, cramped, and inconvenient. One of the glaring electric bulbs, hanging by dusty wires in unsuitable places, had a shade surrounded by highly coloured bobbles. This struck me as pathetic—as also did the electric saucepan in which scraps of meals were cooked on the living-room table. Sometimes Stalin was in evidence brooding over an otherwise empty room, or, with right forefinger extended, talking the Russian I couldn't understand, not with officers in uniform or grand officials, but with working men.

I remember one conversation partly translated by an electrician who spoke French. Stalin was talking again of machines and material as being more important than men. He said: "I am oil-minded. Our distances are so great, the only way we can overcome them is with oil. We need more and more—" Then he questioned me about Persia and the great limestone dome of Central Asia which roofs a natural reservoir of oil.

I told him how when I was last in Azerbازان, Russian troops had crossed the Aras river and raided fifteen miles

into Persia between sunset and sunrise. "Officials at Tabriz and Teheran knew nothing about it," I explained.

Stalin nodded slowly. "That is right. Nobody must ever know our plans. Our strength lies in being very secret."

It seemed to me then that the big, heavy man had little to do with Europe. If you dressed him in a turban and a flowing woollen robe, he would be a typical denizen of Central Asia. No European would expect to understand him. His words would not be supposed to mean anything straight and simple. His intentions would be acknowledged complex and sometimes confused. Promises would merely be a form of excuse. For me, Stalin is far more an Asian than the Shah of Persia. If he said one thing, I would expect him to do exactly the reverse. He likes mystery and the sense of outwitting his opponents. I cannot imagine him keeping an inconvenient treaty or making an obvious one. His is the mentality of the Caucasian Moslem, although he is, I suppose, an atheist—'Let none but Allah and thine own son know what is thy purpose or by what means thou would achieve it.' For Stalin, 'Allah,' of course, means Lenin.

Stalin's third wife once said that his second committed suicide because 'she became terrified of the ignorance in which she was forced to live.'

I imagine the Soviet dictator enjoys the feeling that he can mislead Europe as he chooses. Lenin wrote: 'We are not yet civilized enough to pass directly to Socialism'—and—'Socialism is impossible without democracy.' Such ideas are fundamentally incomprehensible to Stalin. For him civilization is force—possibly force in the hands of workers or those who *forcibly* represent them. His civilization means a multiplicity of machines and of guns. Behind them the workers may be barefoot, untrained, and half-starved. In one thing he agrees with his idol Lenin—in fact as well as in imagination. He wishes to be secure in the west, but he

believes 'the issue of the struggle will be affected by the dominant immensity of population in India and China.' By preference he looks east, but that does not mean he will not do everything he can to strengthen his position in the west.

I remember a very stuffy afternoon in the small gimcrack suburban house inhabited by the girl who was then Stalin's wife. Snow was banked outside the windows and the panes hermetically sealed with strips of paper, were fogged with our breath. It was cold, and the atmosphere thick with the smells of humanity, strong tobacco, and stale food. We talked about the next European war. Stalin said it was inevitable. His words seemed to me unusually apt, so I wrote them down afterwards. He said : " You English cannot expect to say the era of colonization is at an end because you have enough. Germany will want to colonize Europe. It is equally inevitable that Asia will be Sovietized. There must be war—more wars than one. If Germany can choose the moment, there will be a dynamic war, inconceivably destructive and quick. If England is able to choose, the war will be slower and less decisive. For England is the only nation in the world which goes to war unprepared. You talk and talk and talk about fighting, and you refrain when you have every reason to fight. Then suddenly you make war for no reason at all."

I still remember the weight of weariness in Stalin's voice. He continued : " Your Empire—impossible as is the idea of it—constitutes our greatest danger. Maybe it is our only real danger. We could make terms with Germany, but with you, never ! You have too much. The only thing you will never have is a revolution."

With a rare gesture of impatience, Stalin unfastened the top button of his tunic. " I do not understand England," he said. " You are short-sighted and hypocritical, yet you are the most difficult to defeat."

Here was an echo of Hitler's despairing : " You are im-

possibly inefficient and wasteful. You make mistake after mistake, YET——” It is that one doubtful ‘*Yet*’ which bars Stalin’s eastern road. Russia’s Dictator is physically brave, far braver than Hitler. In the April of the British engineers’ trial, I saw him walking alone in the mean streets of Moscow. At the time there were the usual rumours of plots against his life.

Hitler has to screw himself up to a display of physical courage which makes him more aggressive than he means to be. Stalin is afraid of all sorts of mental and moral issues, but not of assassins. Fear of such an established principle as the British Empire may keep him from the eastern roads—through Afghanistan and Persia—by which Hitler urges upon his complex-minded ally the invasion of India.

One thing of importance Stalin said that cold afternoon, while we drank milkless tea in glasses. “Whoever makes the next war, no country will win it and the only system which will benefit will be the Soviet.”

He then made a long speech, only parts of which were translated to me. From such scraps, I gathered that Stalin realized all European wars would ultimately be of benefit not so much to Russia as to Bolshevism. He said: “While Germany fights France and England, our hands will be free and we shall fill them.” He also said: “We can wait for the things we must have. At present our frontiers are without walls or windows. We must have both.” When I asked for explanation, he said: “The Baltic is our defence and also our channel of supplies. It must come back to us——”

A man in a sheepskin coat, with the dirty fleece bursting through the seams, said in German: “Bessarabia should be ours, and Poland. The new, foolish States you made on paper will come back where they belong as soon as you are occupied with war.” He listed Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, with some of the Balkan provinces and continued: “There’s nothing

stable or fixed in Europe to-day. Ours will be the last pattern of civilization. When all your wars are finished, Europe will be ready for Bolshevism."

It always amazed me to hear men who looked so uncouth use big words to express a vision beyond the average comprehension.

In defence, I quoted the losses inscribed against the Soviet —thirty million people dead or disappeared according to the G.P.U. census of 1937, which was achieved by the employment of over a million officials. The Directors of the Statistical Bureau were promptly arrested. They also disappeared, but that did not alter the figures. The equivalent of a whole Poland and ten Finlands have been lost to Soviet Russia by a succession of famines, by exile, execution, suicide, and other forms of 'elimination.'

I quoted from a Yugo-Slav writer's *In the Country of the Great Lie* : "Those who are not familiar with the greatest jail history ever seen, where men die like flies, are beaten like dogs, work like slaves, have no idea what Stalin's 'classless society' means."

The Dictator, in faded khaki with strong, coarse, dusty hair, did not deny anything. He does not deceive himself. He said : "Since Peter the Great, there have always been such things in Russia. I have not had time to forge new tools. I have destroyed cruelty with cruelty. I have been obliged to experiment and to repress. But nothing yet is finished."

He is a man completely unconcerned with individual lives. In May, 1937, alone, some 300,000 ordinary citizens were arrested for treason. Forty thousand others were executed on the mere suspicion of plotting during the Supreme Council's first electoral campaign for 'the most democratic constitution in the world.'

Stalin is not interested. "It is the system which matters," he says. "That must be established at all costs."

After Kirov's murder there were seven million prisoners—more than the total population of London—in the concentration camps. In 1938, the figures of slaughter were so fantastic that only the G.P.U. could believe them. Yet the interminable 'Saint Bartholomew,' the 'long night of knives' continues. Every ruler or leader of the supposedly autonomous republics whom I knew in Central Asia, has disappeared in the last three years. Generals and Field Officers of the Red Army have been, according to a Communist writer, 'mown down in armfuls.' As a trifling instance, among the thirty-seven Party executives who were present at a small Foreign Office reception which I attended during the British engineers' trial, only three were alive when I passed through Moscow again in 1936 on my way from Kabul and Samarkand. In less than three years the other thirty-four—Bolsheviks of long and high standing—had been executed.

Stalin remains unmoved. He is accustomed to death. The word has no more meaning for him. He orders it wholesale and as unconcernedly as a merchant makes up his list of exports. Yet I don't know that he is personally cruel. I have seen him smiling at children, pleased by the flattery of poverty-stricken comrades, cherishing a dog, teasing factory-girls with a blunt and amiable humour which appealed to them. Perhaps 'elimination' has become an arithmetical principle which he does not translate into terms of humanity.

He can order a war which he will not acknowledge is aggressive because by it he can further fortify his frontiers. But he is not in favour of war. I heard long arguments between Lenin's successor, who regards himself as pledged to carry on his leader's work after the pattern approved by 'Ilyitch' and the more nationalist among his followers. They wanted to fight as Russians to regain or extend Russian territory. Stalin, to whom there is only one 'right' or 'wrong'—according to how 'Ilyitch' saw it—was against any war

except in essential defence. Again and again he said : "We shall see the disintegration of bourgeois countries. The rot has already started. It is our duty to help the process, but not by making war. Let the capitalist nations destroy each other. Then we shall be able to reconstruct after the design of 'Ilyitch.'

Stalin the savage is vowed to a knightly purpose. His Grail is the approval of the dreamer and idealist who died before disillusionment came in the wake of slaughter.

He can use every method of frightfulness upon an undefended village, he can far surpass the Nazis in terrorism and tyranny. But at the same time, with sincerity I imagine, he can dream of centuries hence when a world of workers will own and share every natural cultivated resource. Once he said to me in German, quickly and with apparent embarrassment : "I want the workers to have enough—just that."

But I never could move him with my stories of persecution and terror. He seemed to me extraordinarily impersonal.

Working on so vast a scale for the future, when out of millions tortured into their graves, out of all the dreary years without peace, leisure, comfort, privacy, faith, or individuality, would arise 'a new humanity, equal in labour and reward,' he didn't really care about persons.

Whenever I met him, it seemed that he had to make an effort to remember me. I doubt if I ever had a name for him. As 'the English teacher' I made friends with the young lawyers, doctors, and engineers, who were the companions of his then wife—she died before I again visited Moscow. But I'm not at all certain that the arbiter of the Russian continent did not docket me as 'the woman in the bourgeois hat.'

One day after he had stared at me for some time between those habitually narrowed lids—Stalin suffered from snow blindness during his terrible exile in Tsarist Siberia—I asked

the reason of his scrutiny. "It's your hat." Startled I fingered the admirably shaped felt with its absurd scarlet feather which had cheered my way through Russia.

"Well, it certainly is a bourgeois hat!" said the great man's wife.

Once when Stalin had been talking of his six imprisonments, of the Church for which, until the age of sixteen he had been educated by devout parents, saying that it was 'a drug for the exhausted and hopeless,' I asked him what he liked best in life—outside the terrific work which had first inspired him and was already, I thought, oppressing him. He considered the matter and said: "Dogs, children, my own people, the workers in Georgia among whom I was raised."

"And what do you dislike most?"

The answer was surprising and—directed in an unusual rapid murmur to his wife—was accompanied by a smile. With a kettle in her hand the young woman translated, laughing: "He says 'large mountainous females full of words.'"

FOUR

★

MARSHAL VOROSHILOV

IMPRESSIONS OF VOROSHILOV

“THERE, AT LAST, IS A GOOD-LOOKING MAN!” I SAID WITH interest, for I was tired of the heavy, earnest faces monotonous as the streets of Moscow.

The occasion was actually a Foreign Office party, one of those highly impersonal, adequately presented, but certainly not luxurious affairs which are at times exaggerated into orgies by those who disapprove of Russia’s new and still chaotic faith.

“That is Voroshilov—I’ll introduce you,” said my companion, a famous American journalist who, having no white tie for the occasion, had cut a strip from an hotel napkin.

Soon I was talking to a strong, gay man, somewhere in the fifties, with steel-blue eyes which actually laughed at me, and a mouth shutting tight under a restrained moustache.

Most Southern Russians impress me as being the last of the Asiatics, but Voroshilov, born in the Ukraine a serf under the Tsarist regime, herder of cattle, miner, scholar-errant, and Robin Hood of the Revolution, is a European.

I remember our first conversation was about polo and our second about a lovely lady, supposedly condemned by the Soviet to the equivalent of the Sultan’s ‘a sack in the Bosphorus,’ who was given another chance on the condition that she won the confidence of an Ambassador representing one of the Great Powers.

When I retailed this absurdity, Klimentyi Yefremovitch Voroshilov, Commissar for War, undoubtedly the Goering of Russia, put back his head and roared with laughter.

“What a nonsense!” he said. “What will next be invented?”

Even then—while we drank indifferent champagne provided

for the benefit of foreign diplomats and correspondents—I thought of a great German banker's description of Goering:

"A good fellow, a tremendous sportsman, likes the upper classes, would have enjoyed being a duke, very susceptible—a beautiful woman is a tonic to him—but *in spite* of his uniforms, a soldier. Would have been in his element as a freebooter in the Thirty Years War."

Voroshilov is more practical and much more effectively modern than Goering, and he has no hankering after titles or display.

His polo team bridged the gulf between him and Bill Bullett, millionaire and first American Ambassador to Moscow, his spectacular marksmanship—he can cut a card in two or shoot the pips out of 'the Curse of Scotland'—won him a reputation different from that of his fellow-Commissars, his whirlwind romance with the exquisite Jadwiga, daughter of his adjutant, whom he married within an hour of an equally impetuous divorce, was more exciting than the somewhat arid Soviet films to a generation starved of all but intellectual glamour.

No wonder then that I was delighted to find myself—later in the evening—drinking something fiery and colourless in a sort of basement café with this startling Minister of War, a couple of Americans and four unknown Russians.

The conversation, conducted in four languages, behaved like a grasshopper.

At one moment the big man with frost-blue eyes and savage black hair, effectively greying, was prophesying that within a year the last of Stalin's enemies would be underground.

At another he was repeating that only one man, Stalin, could lead Russia 'to security.'

It was at once evident that the Commissar for War shared with his fellow-Russians that inc. edible persecution complex which makes every Bolshevik quite certain his country is in imminent danger of attack.

Voroshilov repeated such sentiments as: "We shall be safe when we have fifty guns for every mile of Polish front" (in 1920 there were eleven machine-guns a mile); and "We have more frontiers than the rest of Europe put together. An army of millions is needed to defend them, but behind that there must be another army—of civilians. For that, I am training the Ossoviakim."

I accused him of a fantastic inferiority complex. "Who do you suppose is going to attack you, and Why, Why, Why?"

The Marshal was startled. "We have everything others want," he said. "Land, minerals, raw materials, man-power—we can grow anything, we can make anything. So many countries are jealous of us——"

There he was, this fearless, honest, and original-minded servant of the Soviet, as obsessed as a child by a bogey!

When I ventured to tease him about this extraordinary hallucination, for until the last two years no Russian supposed attack would come from Germany, he retorted in effect that the whole world was waiting to tear the Soviet Union into pieces.

To my mind Voroshilov, with his love of fun and his cheerful adventurous spirit, is one of the few present-day 'Reds' with whom one can discuss the relative merits of Communism and Capitalism in logical fashion.

Most Bolsheviks deliver impassioned harangues and won't listen to a word on the other side.

Knowing absolutely nothing about everyday life in the rest of Europe, they believe childish nonsense about labour conditions, and insist that the dreary discomfort one experiences from Tiflis or Samarkand to Leningrad is infinitely more luxurious than anything capitalism can provide.

The Commissar for War is different.

But I never could get it out of his mind that Russia was likely to be attacked by a combination of greedy Western

Powers rendered furious by the success of a system which threatened their ideas of civilization.

He visualized astronomical dimensions for the Russian Army—15,000,000 reservists, 5000 of the heaviest bombers, 1,000,000 men always ready mobilized.

When, leaning over the café table slop-stained and scarred with cigarette ends, I described a service I had attended at which the congregation, packed beyond power of movement, had flooded out over the pavement into the city street, he asked with interest :

“ Do you think it’s good for busy working people to think so much of another world and one which is, after all, a doubtful possibility ? ”

It was the first time anyone had asked for my opinion in Moscow, and I was surprised.

“ Have you been down the Volga ? ” continued Voroshilov.

“ No, but I’m going.”

“ Well, when you do, look at the size of the churches.”

“ What do you mean ? ”

“ You’ll see a squalor of straw and mud, so-called houses scarcely rising out of the filth ; you could tread them down with a pair of riding boots ”—admirably cut ones were pushed out to emphasize the speaker’s point—“ but the churches are solid as the greed of generations of priests.

“ You’ll see them all right, spiritual barracks, clean, white, and lots of domes. Very pretty you’ll think them, but look at their size, built out of the miserable earnings of the peasants ! ”

Voroshilov’s language is generally picturesque. When he is moved it is a furnace.

One can easily understand his retort to the verdict of Trotsky’s plotters : “ *First and now* there are two men who must die, Stalin and Voroshilov.”

The Marshal, whose heroes are Sweden’s great Gustavus Adolphus and the young Alexander sighing for new worlds

to conquer, whose habitual seat is the saddle, whose fingers curve naturally to the trigger, repeated his challenge of 1929. "Our powder is still dry, our horses still saddled, and our weapons newly sharpened."

When I knew the man better, I asked him what he had most enjoyed in his life of crowded adventure.

"I don't know," he said, "because it's all been fun. I've enjoyed everything except learning to read."

He told me, in scraps of vivid description, how he had been nearest death when on the great plains bordering the Sea of Azov, during his boyhood days as a herd, a mob of cattle, stampeded.

"War's not nearly as dangerous. I thought I was done," he said.

He spoke of fear as 'a weight and an emptiness in the middle,' but added that he couldn't remember any other occasion on which he had felt it.

"Not even when you ran a Red printing press under the noses of the Tsar's police?" I asked.

"No. That was exciting. I used to smuggle out the papers in the sleeves of my sheepskin coat—it was about as big as a tent.

"Before the Revolution I was always smuggling—it was a grand game. I wonder how many rifles I've carried in loads of ore from the mines, and ammunition stacked snug under fodder in a farm cart!"

"Weren't you ever caught?"

"Yes, once. You won't find a proper Commissar who hasn't been in prison. The best have escaped from Siberia."

His blue eyes can be glacier-cold. I wouldn't like to make an enemy of 'Klim' Voroshilov.

So smart he is in well-fitting uniforms with red tabs and golden stars, so gay and splendid he can be on any kind of floor when gipsies are playing a waltz.

Mustapha Kemal, the last President of Turkey, desperately

anxious to be European and modern, found in him a sympathetic ally when he ordered his officers: "Dance, curse you, and if you can't dance, learn!"

"It's healthy exercise," said "Klim." "Not as good as riding, but fun all the same."

Alone among the Soviet leaders I have met, Voroshilov seems to be free of the aching suspicion which makes each for his short term of power, so fearful of rivals, so dependent on a private bodyguard of spies, so inclined to the 'purges' that weaken Russia.

Unafraid, loyal to an unchanging conception of Communism, the Commissar for War has one major aim—to make the Soviet Union so strong that it can resist military attack—but he has other ideas.

"Soldiers are not only fighting material. They've got minds, and I'm going to educate them," he said. "They've got to think if they're to be any use at all, and they've got to be capable of enjoyment." He laughed.

I remember we were eating in the company of an army doctor and a woman in military uniform who had fought in the Battalion of Death in the Caucasus, and was now in the Ordnance Department.

The woman's stories of bodies plastered and frozen under the wheels of slipping guns were a ghastly accompaniment to the Marshal's plans. "A man dies better if he's enjoyed himself," said this Robin Hood, who habitually slipped through the fingers of the Tsarist Secret Police.

"I've always hoped to die when I was furiously angry," I said. "If I were angry enough, I wouldn't mind."

"Oh, no!" retorted Voroshilov, "I'd like to be happy and gay—then I'd die awfully easily."

Russia's Commander-in-Chief is an honest Communist. Like Stalin, he really believes in the religion of Lenin, but, having a Western mind he is anxious that Russia should take

her place as a great power among Western nations. When he talked to me of the Maginot and Mannerheim lines, he said : " We should have such fortifications ourselves. Then we should be safe."

Always, there is this emphasis on the need to secure frontiers which the Soviet Commissars believe both vulnerable and liable to be attacked without warning. I asked the Marshal what was his greatest ambition—after Russia had joined the League of Nations—and he replied : " To see my country acknowledged the United States of Europe and for myself, I should like great fortifications called after me ! "

He laughed and added : " You will see it one day—a Voroshilov line."

Some sour red wine had upset. With the blunt end of a fork the Commissar for Defence drew a frontier on the stained table. It was a decidedly optimistic one, including most of the Baltic. At first he laughed at my protests. Then he became serious and in his big, blunt way, forcing his shoulders forward as if he were brushing away obstacles, he explained : " You've talked a lot about executions in Russia. That was necessary. The plan had to go on. Opposition had to stop. It is difficult to knock anything new into the head of a Slav. Very often he'll only understand if you knock his head off altogether ! But there have been enough deaths—" Voroshilov actually sighed. He was trying to express something much too big for him.

" Perhaps it would be better if we were at war again. There are many small wars we should fight—to strengthen our frontiers—and perhaps one big war to establish our unity."

I asked him if he approved of war, and he replied :

" There has never been a new religion without persecution. A nation must go to war before it grows up."

Here is a fundamental difference between Stalin and Voroshilov. The former is ill-educated, ill-informed, devoted

to Lenin's memory, determined at all cost to complete the work handed on to him. He wants no national Russia, but a vast federation of Soviet States bound and inspired by an ideology which exists to-day among certain students and Party-workers, but which has disappeared altogether among the masses. These have suffered too much. They are either apathetic or resentful. But the Marshal believes a successful war would rouse their national spirit. Among the peasants this is much stronger than anything they have felt for the Soviet.

Speaking of his leader, Voroshilov said : " He has a tremendous will. Nothing will turn him from one road to another. He is the best machine we have in Russia to-day, but his mind is not mobile as I would like to see my army in the field."

The organization of the modern Red Army, its startling expansion and its mechanical armament is generally attributed to Tukachevsky, but Voroshilov always speaks of Soviet soldiers as if they were his own flesh and blood. He bangs on the table and says : " I must have this or that for my thirtieth or three-hundredth regiment—" Everything to him is personal. He hates the Germans and admires them. I've heard him talk of them for an hour on end approving their efficiency and organization, their one-track determination to succeed. But he never suggested an alliance. I gathered that he regarded the Nazis as cherished enemies against whom it would give him immense pleasure to fight. " But not yet," he used to say. " That would be too big a war until I have made every Russian into a soldier."

It would be immensely interesting to listen to an argument between Stalin and Voroshilov. There must have been many. There will surely be more. For there is a wide divergence in their points of views, due to their different characters. Stalin having made of Lenin his Messiah, wishes to carry out the purposes of ' Ilyitch-who-was-always-right ' in no matter what way or by what means.

Thus it happens that in order to establish Lenin's grandly conceived, quite impossible Communist State, his successor uses entirely un-Communist methods. Voroshilov is more practical. He would like quite genuinely to give every worker almost as good a time as he wants to have himself. He is worried sometimes because 'it doesn't come off!' I've heard him say: "The Russians are bad material for Communism. We could do much better with other races."

Once, when a youth at a neighbouring café table got drunk and bemoaned his hard lot at the top of his voice, Voroshilov laid hold of him and shook him violently, delivering a harangue of which I understood no word. Returning to the last course of his own abundant meal, he said: "These people endure too much. It is the Russian way and how many centuries will it take to alter it? They have made a habit of being oppressed. Gold, hunger, and the overseer's knout have eaten deep into their minds. The priests got them down and there they have stayed. We ought to be able to make good Communists out of the children, but it is hard work making a horse jump a fence which he believes is the end of the world."

In those days, before the army executions of 1937, Voroshilov appeared to see no unbridgeable gulf between Communism and a comparatively constitutional form of government. He obviously wanted the Russia of which he was proud although he knew her defects, to take a worthy place among other nations. He was not wholly in sympathy with the idea of the Secret Police. He said:

"We cannot change everything at once. The people are not yet sufficiently educated to be left alone. They are lazy and would go backwards if it was less trouble to them. They must be watched. They must feel the spur, but not all the time. The need will pass. Then we shall be able to rid ourselves of the last legacies of Tsarism."

Generally the Commissar for Defence spoke openly in loud, clear tones. He moved about more than most Russians, and gave the impression of an alert and vigorous personality.

"I like foreigners," he said to me. "They are amusing, although they have so little stuffing in them!"

He meant that we were content to live without an overwhelming purpose. But speaking of the Gestapo, he seemed a little uncertain, as if he regretted the system while acknowledging its necessity.

"I want men to be happy. That is Communism—happiness for everyone," he would say in a puzzled voice, when I talked of oppression and the endless series of deaths. The Marshal did not look a century ahead like Stalin. He reminded me at times of a bull bewildered and depressed in the arena.

The constant executions were like the *banderilleros'* darts. They stuck in his hide and irritated him. But it never occurred to him that the faith of Lenin could not be turned into fact. Where Stalin would say: "I must do as Ilyitch would have done—then I am sure to be right," Voroshilov, tempted and puzzled by the prosperity of Scandinavia, would convince himself with: "We must have time. We have so much territory and so few roads and railways. The people must be educated. The best thing is to make soldiers of them."

Intelligence to Voroshilov is the Communist soldier's point of view. Yet in ethics, it should not exist. For enforced Communism is a contradiction in terms.

What really happened in 1937, nobody outside Russia knows, and few within her borders are better informed.

I doubt if Marshal Tukachevsky was ever a whole-hearted Communist, but he was certainly no traitor. Two of the other Generals who were 'eliminated' on the charge of plotting against the State were Jews. As such, they could have no sympathy with Germany. But it was inevitable that the Red Army, mechanized, armed, drilled, trained after a Western

pattern, should gradually develop Western ideas. Officers in command and men in the ranks became impatient of the foolish burden of espionage. They began to feel silly and ineffective, in spite of their stupendous marches and magnificent parades.

Naturally they hankered after a more modern form of civilization than the confusion of idealism, terror, and cultural inefficiency by which they were ruled.

Death had ceased to be fearful to them. It had become a recurrent irritation, reminding them of failures which they rightly considered unnecessary.

So they risked and suffered their own deaths. All they had plotted, I imagine, was a national rather than an international form of Government.

In 1937 Stalin, faced with the destruction of his world-Communism centre and the shelving of Lenin's plans, acted with savage promptitude. The modern-minded Generals died. "The revolution is not yet over," said the Dictator, but Voroshilov, although he supported and will always, I think, support Stalin, said regretfully: "The Revolution should have been over."

For, despite his interest in having 'a few small wars by way of exercise and sport,' the Commissar for Defence is kind, loyal, and honest. He has no fear for himself, so he blunders or charges through many fabrications of spies or secret agents. He dominates the army because they regard him as a human being.

The loyalty of his own officers is one of the few personal equations important in Russia to-day. If the adventurous Marshal argues with Stalin—or with anyone else—he says what he thinks, and that is rare under the Soviet.

In the middle of the night which is when all the best conversations take place between Moscow and Tashkent, I listened to him talking French to a foreign journalist.

It was in one of those fearful flats where nothing fits and nothing is finished. The pipes for the central heating had

not yet been fitted to the walls. The radiators stood aloof, and the only heat came from a charcoal brazier.

There was a *samovar* with a cloud of steam condensing over it, a stuffed owl sitting on a clock which did not go, hard wooden chairs and table, paper-covered books on the floor, portraits of Party leaders on the wall, and a very beautiful icon with a post-card photograph of Lenin stuck in front of the Madonna.

Voroshilov was talking earnestly. He said that Stalin would never countenance 'a war of attack.' It would need the utmost persuasion to induce him to let Russia fight as a nation outside her own territory. "Lenin's idea was to change men's ideas, not their frontiers," he said, and added: "That indeed is Communism."

But under the influence of skilful questioning, he confessed: "There are some inconspicuous wars which it would be sensible to fight. If we had the Baltic safe in our hands, we could base our defence much farther west." He described the Napoleonic tactics by which in case of the attack which he—like every other Soviet leader expected would come from allied democracies, or from a Germany land-greedy—he would lure the enemy farther and farther into Russia, evacuating if necessary the western towns and basing his final defence on the Urals. For this reason, the main Soviet aerodromes are far inland, away from the supposedly vulnerable frontiers.

It was with the air of an overgrown schoolboy that Voroshilov, guerrilla fighter of the Soviet who now dreams of mechanized masses, of Russian air thickened by planes, of Russian earth germinating tanks, acknowledged that Stalin would—in all probability—not make up his mind to any war. "He is patient," sighed the Marshal. "He knows that everything will crumble into our hands in time, but I like to go fast—" he laughed, with the immense enjoyment which is part of his attitude to life.

"I would like to improve the shape of Russia." The grin faded, and he added seriously: "I would like to feel safe. We deserve safety after so much."

It is curious that a man so prodigiously vital, who drinks, swears, storms into a room and shouts, treats his weapons as if they were his first and last loves, makes enemies and ignores them, tells his opinions to all who ask, shoots a man or breaks him in a fury of anger to his face, keeps his friends, and sometimes even a woman—like the beautiful, reckless Caterina Davydovna, who rides as hard as her husband and lives exactly as she chooses with nearly as much zest—yes, it is strange that this man should think primarily of defence.

There is a saying in the Soviet republics: "We believe in Lenin. We serve Stalin. We love Klim the First."

His most stalwart supporters—and there are many who believe he must eventually inherit the dictatorship of Russia—talk of history as if it were divided into before and after Voroshilov. Yet he is not and has never been a terror and warning like most Dictators, from the 'Boney will get you' of nurses admonishing refractory children to the inquisition of Stalin and the G.P.U.

Voroshilov is essentially the good comrade who loves noise and the harsh, seamed faces of soldiers round a table loaded with food, good laughs, heaps of tobacco, Vodka, and a good time. He has supported Stalin through years which must have seemed unendurable. When Party workers doubted the necessity for so much hardship, for poverty, misery, and death. He used to say: "There is only one way to reach our end and that end is worth while. We must go on."

For Voroshilov, many times disappointed but incurably hopeful, courageous to the last drop of his blood, violent but not intentionally cruel, that end is—quite simple and honestly—greater happiness for working-men.

How difficult it is to translate in another language the

spirit of a great man and a soldier, cruel when he does not think but without suspicion and without fear, a lover of life and courage, of women and food and horses and drink, a man who has served well his two idols—the People's Russia and the People's Leader.

Oddly enough my casual conversations with Voroshilov always seem to have taken place to an accompaniment of much eating, coupled with incomprehensible speech.

There were always Russians arguing in a cloud of smoke, there were always empty glasses and huge mouthfuls of food, all of which tasted the same. There was always an under-current of explanation—"Klim is the only man who dares stand up to Stalin. He made such a noise about the soldiers being insufficiently fed—that was in the worst of our famines—that he got their rations increased . . . out of nothing! There wasn't anything *then!*"

"The Kremlin fairly shook when he threatened to lead the peasants against the industrialists!"

"And when Rykov was dismissed" (in 1930) "Klim resigned, but of course they were both back again in a matter of hours. He doesn't care what he does or says—"

For such reasons Voroshilov is sure of Russian affection. Doubtless to future generations he will be a Saint Christopher, attendant upon the trinity—Karl Marx, Lenin, and Stalin.

But meanwhile, I think of him—against a background of huge words, more and more words meaning very little, but emitted by earnest and sometimes rather frightened young people—saying cheerfully :

"You haven't tasted this or that? No wonder you want to go to sleep. Hurry up—it's getting cold." Or "That was a great horse, you couldn't stop him! As good as any woman! They're alike, aren't they? Can't be trusted with their own way!" A big laugh and another great mouthful of food.

FIVE



*ADMIRAL HORTHY,
REGENT OF HUNGARY*

ADMIRAL HORTHY, REGENT OF HUNGARY

IN THE DUSK OF A SUMMER EVENING, WE MOTORED—MY husband and I—with Baron Rubido Zichy, Hungarian Minister to London, along the dusty white roads beyond Budapest. We were bound for Gödolo, a hunting castle belonging to the Emperor Franz Josef, which the Regent uses as an official residence. Where two sharp corners encourage a Magyar driver to show his mettle, a peasant succeeded in falling under the wheels. We stopped. We got out. The man picked himself up, shook the dust from his sheepskin coat, retrieved whatever he wore on his head and, before we could say anything at all, burst into a stream of apologies for being run over. When Baron Zichy spoke to him he bowed deeply and repeated that it was most inconsiderate of him to have got in his Excellency's way. With sufficient money to buy a flock of new pillows and quilts—for wealth in Hungarian villages always seems to be measured in terms of bedding—he stood by the roadside looking with ecstasy and surprise at the pengös thrust into his hands. Blessings followed us as we drove away. I did not know there were so many saints in the calendar.

I remember Gödolo as very white with a great number of windows. A causeway guarded by sentry-boxes leads—between sentinel pines—to the main entrance surmounted by an arched pediment and a cupola. On the other side the house stretches graciously in two long wings towards a garden. Inside there seemed to me to be a vast number of animals' heads and horns. I remember an immense portrait of the

German Emperor, and in the Admiral's study pictures of ships and battles. But the room is dominated by the old Emperor Franz Josef in the uniform from which I can never imagine him separated. For the rest, I have a recollection of very pleasant rooms with white walls that might have belonged to an English country-house, of many photographs in all of which there were horses, of flowers in porcelain bowls, and of flowers on the chintzes. Gödolo was a home as I saw it that evening, but it was not so very long since Bela Kun's Reds had stormed across Hungary. The best day of Admiral Horthy's life must have been on 16 November 1919, when he rode—on a white charger—into Budapest at the head of the national army which he had created and with which he destroyed the terror let loose by the Soviet. Unless, of course, the best of all his days was postponed for nineteen years. For it may really have been in the same month—November 1938—when again on a white horse reminiscent of Arpad, the legendary Magyar hero who conquered the Slavs of the Carpathians—the Regent rode across the Danube at the head of an army to take back Hungarian earth lost by the Treaty of Trianon.

But it was not altogether a happy day when we dined at Gödolo, for there were still madmen who wanted the life of Horthy as the first breach in the walls of Central European civilization. Terrorists risked their own lives in feudal Hungary in order to kill the man who had restored the peace, order, and security, which were so many fortresses against their labour of destruction. Sentries at the gates had been doubled. The Admiral would have no soldiers in his garden, but gamekeepers were armed when they patrolled the woods.

The strain, I thought, had begun to tell on Madame Horthy. I remember her as beautiful and very gracious. She was dressed in grey and she did not need to copy the manners of a queen, for she has charm, dignity, and distinction of her own. Her voice is warm and full of inflections. She greeted

us as if she were delighted to see us, and indeed she is interested in all her friends and acquaintances. But that night I thought she had been listening for a long time. What she expected was a shot. Her eyes were kind, gentle, and young, but they were also watchful.

The Regent was good-looking in the square, strong, weather-burned way of a sailor. He wore naval uniform, talked English, but said he found French easier. I sat beside him at dinner and he talked about the sea. Each of us tried to find a harbour the other did not know. Hong Kong, Rio, Sidney! We argued about their separate beauties. Then I thought I had won with Vavau in the Tongan Isles, but the Regent retorted with a whole string of islands of which I had never heard. We compromised at last with Kilauea—the house of eternal fire—where the volcano, with hair (of the Goddess Pélé) aflame, is reflected in Hawaian waters. “You evidently like violence,” said the Admiral, “and I enjoy a storm myself, but I like harbours peaceful.”

“And your life?” I asked.

“Decidedly so. I am only a fighter when I am on a ship-of-war’s bridge. That to me is the natural way of fighting.”

“You’ve done all kinds in defence of Hungary.”

“For Hungary I would do anything!”

We drank the most delicious Tokay. It reminded me of apricots on an old brick wall. The Regent laughing, said: “I shall always like the sea best. I am sea-sick on land. But if I can’t be on a ship, then I am happiest on my farm. I like horses and dogs and talking to shepherds on the Puzta plain. I hate being surrounded by people who are afraid of what is going to happen to me, although I must say I should not care to be assassinated. You have to be born a king to have the royal indifference to these gentlemen with bombs, or to knives in the back! But I don’t expect they’ll get me. I hope they won’t, for I haven’t finished my job.”

The Regent of Hungary talks with the direct simplicity of a sailor. He is honest and intelligent. For years, neighbouring statesmen have said he is a bluff and hearty country gentleman altogether too outspoken about his ideas, but they must be wrong, for he has held Hungary secure in the changing turmoil of Europe. He has developed her resources and cherished her traditional inspirations. He has controlled the hot-heads who would have flung themselves into a dozen impossible escapades in order to regain their lost territory, and encouraged those who would otherwise have lived only with memories and regrets. To Horthy above all others in Europe should be ascribed the ancient Highland tribute—‘With courage undaunted and faith undimmed.’

“I shall never be a King or the pretence of a King,” he said to me towards the end of dinner. “I hold Hungary for my King, but I cannot give back anything less than a Hungary free, prosperous, and strong.” He must have been puzzled, I thought, when his exiled King and Emperor returned in defiance of the Allies and demanded the throne of a subject who had sworn obedience. “That was the hardest decision I ever had to make,” said Horthy, and he looked a little bewildered, as if he were a schoolboy choosing between two sets of rules.

“Hungary or the King,” I reflected aloud, and the Regent interrupted: “They ought to be the same.”

Several times I have heard him say: “I will never take the King’s place.” He does not live in royal state, either at Godolo, where he invites his friends to shoot in the surrounding woods, or in the enormous palace at Buda where he contents himself with a wing containing less than a dozen rooms. Whenever he can escape from work or the official ceremonies he reduces to a minimum, he is out in the forest with a gun or among the horses he breeds at Kenderes, his own place. Here there are cattle sheds and pigsties, grand-

children running about with woolly Hungarian sheepdogs, peasants in leather coats, to whom the Regent is no more than a popular country landowner, pheasants treated with respect so that they can subsequently be shot, and lots of foals. "You must come and shoot boar," invited the Regent. "It is the best sport of all. If you like we can go out very early one morning and see if we can get a shot. There is only a second, you know, while the boar crosses a path. You never see him except for that one moment, and he goes so fast you wonder if you *have* seen him." Leaning across the table he made plans with one of his good-looking sons and with his brother Eugène, who is a magnificent shot, and has hunted big game all over the world. "Where can Colonel McGrath get a good head?" he asked. "It is still so hot. With you," turning to Baron Zichy, "the stags will all be in velvet, but perhaps with Bettlen,¹ it might be managed. Where is the best chance?" All the men discussed forests and how, on high ground in the mountains, it might be possible for my husband to get a stag. We might have been in any Scottish house. But when the women followed Madame Horthy to the drawing-room, and that beautiful woman in pale grey with hair already softly grey, I think, sat beside a window to which her eyes unconsciously strayed, I realized that—after all—it could not be Scotland. There was too much anxiety.

Like her husband, Madame Horthy is a good judge of character. She talked of neighbouring countries as if they were people, and especially of the chances of a monarchical restoration in Greece. "I hope it'll be soon," she said. "Why?" I asked, for I had admired the shrewd intolerant Venezelos, narrow perhaps in his ambitions, since he could find no place for a throne in his Alexandrine Greece, which he hoped to extend over Asia Minor. I expected a serious

¹ Count Bettlen, the Prime Minister.

answer, but Madame Horthy said, with a smile: "Well, it would please so many other Kings." Her eyes lit and she looked very lovely. "Kings always like more Kings—it makes them feel safe," she explained.

At that moment there was a shot. It sounded quite near. Madame Horthy stiffened. Her face became as white as the wall behind her, but she went on talking with gentle amusement about her neighbours—countries, not people. There seemed to me no reason why she should not do so because a gamekeeper had—I supposed—shot at a hawk or a stoat. Then I remembered the methods of Bela Kun, and I understood why everybody was looking at the door.

White-lipped, Madame Horthy said that I would enjoy Transylvania where Queen Marie of Roumania was building herself yet another castle. She did not remind me that the land and the people had long been Hungarian. Suddenly the door opened. An officer came into the room. He came quickly and quietly with a reassuring phrase on his lips, and the blood came back into the face of the lady in grey. Everyone relaxed. "It was a mistake," said a girl, very beautiful in white satin, and she looked at us all blankly as if she could not yet focus her eyes.

So it was a gamekeeper, I thought. But since that moment—which, because it was like so many others in the first years of the Regency when Hungary stood for civilization against the savagery of Russia, Madame Horthy may have forgotten—I have been among the legion of her admirers. ' Sieg Heil ! ' There are greater victories than Hitler's !

In Hungary, the peasants say that Horthy is their luck. "He will get back for us all that we have lost," they insist. And in the little wooden houses, scrubbed clean and bleached by the sun, with geese walking in and out of the door, goose liver in the larder, and goose feathers plumping cumulus clouds of pillows, they talk as if he belonged to them. But

the last Emperor of Austria, Charles, the crowned King of Hungary, whom the Regent could not justifiably receive in his own palace above the Danube, also thought that the Admiral's well-known luck would save his crown. Of this episode Horthy does not care to speak. His friends say it has remained for him a bitter, personal grief. He did what was right for Hungary, but at the cost of a personal allegiance. And he is a man who has never let down a friend.

Of course, the Horthy 'luck' that everyone talks about, is really a genius for doing the right thing in the right way and at the right time. As a sailor he was successful because he took risks quickly—so quickly that Admiral Acton's squadron failed to drive him into Italian waters in the battle of Otranto. The episode of Siofok is another example. The Cabinet wanted to stop a Hungarian army on the march. Horthy, with the orders tied to a sandbag so that they could be dropped from an aeroplane, flew the length of the marching columns. As the pilot circled to attract attention, the Admiral's A.D.C., Captain Magashazy, lifted the bag to throw it over the side. Then Horthy made one of his quick decisions. The noise of the engines prevented speech, but with a very slight, slow movement, the future Regent shook his head. The plane went on to Siofok, former headquarters of a Red division. The landing-ground was still guarded by a few shabby terrorists. To them unarmed went Horthy. "I am the Commander-in-Chief of the Nationalist Army," he, said. The soldiers gaped and fingered their rifles. "Attention. Present Arms," ordered Captain Magashazy. The remnants of an army obeyed.

The troops which Admiral Horthy had watched from his plane went on marching. They came at last to Siofok. This was the beginning of Hungary's successful war against disintegration. Her enemies were Russia, the Treaty of Trianon, and a Roumania already in occupation.

The last time I saw the Regent was two summers ago in Budapest. He had heard from his brother Eugène that my husband and I were in the capital. He insisted that we must come that very afternoon to the finals of the international water-polo to be played between Hungary and Germany. The first thing he said to us was : "When did you arrive? Only yesterday? Then I forgive you. Had it been earlier, I should have been angry because you did not let me know you were here." The Regent is the staunchest of friends. He never forgets.

We sat in a row beside the great swimming-pool on Margaretin Island and the Regent spoke, in English, of all that had happened to Hungary since we last met. The country is always his first concern, but he is very wise. He once said : "The Treaty of Trianon did one good thing for us. It taught us to work. Before then life had been too easy—except, of course, in the war."

That afternoon by the pool, he said : "We've had a good harvest. My horses are doing well. You see my luck is holding."

The German team rose waist-high out of the water to shout their "Sieg 'Heil!" and the Regent saluted them, but when these solid giants, much larger and slower than their opponents, scored a goal, H.H. did not applaud. "But you *must* clap—" I protested, in the middle of tales of the Italian official visit—a young Princess, who was intended to look with favour upon a suitable Austrian Archduke had been much more disposed to the company of one of the good-looking Horthy sons. There are three of them. Edda Ciano is supposed to have been decidedly susceptible to their charms!

The Regent kept his hands doubled up on his knees. "No, no," he said, "why should I clap our opponents. I want Hungary to win!" Whenever his own people scored, Horthy smiled with the happiness of a boy. When they won, he nearly

split his gloves in appreciation of their victory. The crowd shouted the old Hungarian battle-cry: "Hurry! Hurry!" Legend has it that the Magyar nobles galloping their small sturdy horses across the plains of Hungary to face the invading Turks, in long-ago battle between the Crescent and the Cross, called to each other "Hurry! Hurry!" And the whole of Christendom repeated that plea for haste to the last defenders of civilization, gathering in their furred velvets to repel the hordes of Asia.

"When next you come here," said the Regent, "our patience may have been rewarded. No mistake lasts for ever. Trianon and Versailles must soon be revised—I hope, oh, how I hope by the English who are the friends of our hearts. But do not wait too long or Germany will take from you the privilege that should be yours."

In their love of horses and dogs, in their love of country life, of shooting and racing, and a friendly, simple existence, the Hungarians are nearest to us of all European peoples. Their hospitality is prodigious. It is said: "Every pengö (shilling) in Budapest changes pockets each night of the week—and every pengö is spent in the service of a woman." This is as it should be, for Hungarian women are beautiful. The men are good fighters and good sportsmen. There is no Englishman who has not felt at home and happy after his first moments in Budapest. Poignant and true is the comment of an honest, brave, and simple Czech soldier who regretted aloud to my husband that we were leaving his 'workers' republic' for Hungary. "You will forget all about us," he said. "It is natural, for there you will be among your own people. The English and the Hungarians always understand each other. You are all gentlemen together."

A year ago as I write, Hungary regained part of the land she should never have lost—on a conference table instead of a battle-field. Englishmen with a knowledge of Europe

must all have been disappointed that Germany was responsible for the revision of the Treaty made by ignorance, greed, and bitterness—a treaty that lost what seven million men had died to win.

In the middle of his triumph, with a new country to organize and secure, the Regent found time to share his success. “Never, never will we forget” is Hungary’s justification and her pride. To my husband—from the white hunting castle of Gödolo, H.H. sent: “my thanks for your long and faithful friendship to Hungary.”

SIX

★

*KING BORIS
OF BULGARIA*

KING BORIS OF BULGARIA

IN THE ROYAL PALACE AT VARNA, WHICH IS JUST A CHARMING country house in keeping with the simplicity encouraged by King Boris of Bulgaria, there used to be what our grandparents called a 'sociable.' It is covered with bright yellow satin and it stood in the very middle of the drawing-room.

Impressed by this amusing form of seat, shaped like an 'S,' I remember asking King Boris if he had ever carried on a conversation over his shoulder, seated almost back to back with his companion. The King laughed.

"When I was a child," he said, "I used to sit beside my mother and reach up to talk into her ear. I remember then I thought of the yellow seat as a boat. It seemed to me very fine and, as I don't like change, I expect the 'sociable,' as you call it, will always remain in the same place at Varna."

Before his marriage in 1930, I thought of the young King Boris as the loneliest man in Europe. His mother a Princess of Bourbon-Parma was dead, his father King Ferdinand in exile, and he himself a bachelor. I remember at that time asking the King why he had invited no princess to reign with him over his country of roses and mountains. "My seat is far too dangerously situated for me to ask anyone to share it," was his reply. Such is no longer the case, for by his own efforts King Boris has won the confidence and the devotion of the most democratic people in Eastern Europe. Stalwart, self-reliant, reserved as our own Highlanders, magnificently brave, the Bulgarians are fighters born, but they are not courtiers.

As a Scottish chieftain among his clansmen, so King Boris has lived among the thrifty, hard-working, straight-talking individualists who compose his people.

"I must be their familiar friend before I can be their king," he said to me at Karlova Bania, a farm to which he used to escape for the peace of country life, living as the simplest of his subjects lived. My husband and I had motored out from Philippopolis to spend the afternoon with King Boris. I remember an open door in a white wall, cows in the road outside, no equerry or guard. A slight, dark man, whose good looks and eager intelligence cause their owner to look much younger than his years, ran out of the charming farm-house to kiss my hand as I got out of the motor car. It was the King, and in his gracious hospitality he left me no time to curtsey before leading us both into the sitting-room and saying simultaneously that it was too fine to be indoors. There is no titular landed aristocracy in Bulgaria. It is a sturdy and proud nation of peasants, small farmers, and government officials.

"There is no man in the country to whom I cannot talk as an equal," said the King.

Throughout his reign, which has gone from success to success, he has walked about among villagers and mountaineers and talked to them as a fellow-farmer, or as a sportsman intent on stalking yet another deer in the beautiful hill country.

The most hardened have succumbed to his charm, for King Boris has inherited from Bourbon ancestors the gift which has so often proved their destruction. It has been said of that proud and ancient ruling family, "they learned nothing and forgot nothing." This may be true of King Alfonso of Spain, but it is certainly not so of the Bulgarian monarch, who has devoted his whole life to learning about his people and how best he can serve both his own country and the peace of Europe. Kings are too easily credited with charm. It is

enough that they smile and repeat an amiable stereotyped phrase, but Boris really has this elusive quality.

My husband and I were equally conscious of it even when the King more or less upset us in a ditch of the Balkan mountains. King Boris had insisted on taking us out motoring. A long open car appeared apparently without being ordered. The King took the wheel and I sat beside him. My husband, an A.D.C., and the chauffeur piled into the back. Off we went along dusty white roads. Delighted peasants waved to us as if we were at once their children and their gods. High up into the hills we climbed.

“If I weren’t a king I could always earn my living as a chauffeur, couldn’t I?” said the King, as he took corners at speed. (He has been called ‘the best chauffeur in Europe.’) “But I’m not certain I wouldn’t have chosen to be an engine-driver,” he said, laughing. “That must be a great life. I often drive my own train. . . .” Just about that moment a lumbering ox-waggon, which seemed to go on for ever, lurched round a corner on the wrong side of the road. There seemed to be no road left at all. Feeling that collision was inevitable, I shut my eyes, but King Boris contrived the impossible. With presence of mind and audacity he turned the car into and over a ditch. With a bump we came to rest among furrows. Unperturbed the King leaped out followed by the rest of us. In a minute or two he was working with the other men to extricate the car.

By birth and breeding King Boris should have been the centre of keen, subtle intellectuals, for he is a direct descendant of St. Louis (Louis IX of France) and of the splendid ‘Sun King’ (Louis XIV). But, although he is a good conversationalist in eight languages, with a thorough knowledge of political and diplomatic history, he is not particularly interested in art, sculpture, or literature. He loves music, however, especially Wagner’s, which he once said made him

feel "both sad and triumphant." Inheriting, by the abdication of his father King Ferdinand immediately after the War, a disillusioned, impoverished, and defeated, although still grandly courageous country, Boris at the age of twenty-four had first to forge his own armour. It must have cost him a great deal to appear and perhaps, at last, to be unmoved by so many difficulties and disasters, by plots, by destruction, and murder within his own distraught land. But before his marriage with Princess Giovanna of Italy, which set a seal on his popularity, the King had learned how to master his own life and build up a lasting national stability. It was he who in stormier years encouraged the State visit of his neighbour, King Alexander of Yugo-Slavia, murdered so shortly afterward in France.

King Alexander wore a bullet-proof waistcoat when he went to that vital meeting with King Boris, a meeting which did much to establish peace between two warrior peoples who for centuries had fought each other as a matter of course. The precaution was unnecessary, for his royal host, unarmed, stood always a little in front of him protecting with his body the man on whom he counted for the consolidation of his own peace projects in Macedonia—the Ireland of the Balkans.

An eminent Yugoslavian, who yearly plays host to the Duke and Duchess of Kent, told me that while the plans for this momentous visit were being arranged, King Boris summoned the Commander-in-Chief of the army, who would be in the royal car on official occasions. "Should King Alexander be assassinated in our country, remember I must die too," King Boris said to him. "You must give me your word of honour that you will shoot me yourself. So the attack will appear to have been made on me, not on our guest."

I don't know whether this tale has been exaggerated by appreciative repetition, but it is indicative of the character of a man who would not live if he had failed to protect his guest

and of a King who would not allow his country to bear the stigma of having intended to murder a royal neighbour and visitor.

King Boris's courage is instinctive. I do not know if he has ever been afraid, but I am certain he has never shown it. My husband and I happened to be motoring with him in the country almost immediately after an attempt had been made to blow King and Government sky-high while they were all worshipping in the cathedral at Sofia. Dusk fell while we were still far from Philippopolis where we had an evening engagement. Suddenly King Boris stopped the car. "It'll be quicker if you go straight on from here. I'll walk home across the fields," he said. Naturally, we protested. The equerry in attendance was already half-out of the motor car, but King Boris told him to get back into it. "It's all right," he said. "I'll have an opportunity to talk to some of the villagers on the way." Lifting his cap he smiled, waved a hand, and was off into the twilight.

The last we saw of the King that evening was a slender figure striding through cows and dust, saluting the homeward-bound peasants who turned to stare after him.

In recent years King Boris has visited England as often as possible. Especially he likes Scotland, for it reminds him of his own mountains. He is a great friend of three generations of our Royal Family. After his first visit to Balmoral (while the late King George was still alive) he told a friend how delighted he had been by Queen Mary's spontaneous kindness. "She kissed me on both cheeks—it was so charming of her. I felt for a moment as if I had refound my mother."

Some years ago, when I was staying with the Carnegies, who live near Glamis, Princess Elizabeth came to tea. She was full of stories about Boris whom she then—as a little girl—called 'my King.' She had been obliged to look up his far-away country on the map and was surprised to find him

so "helpful with geography." "He knows so many things—interesting things," said the Princess and then, with the formality of perfect manners, she turned to Mrs. Carnegie: "So do you, of course," she said.

The King's great day—and it lasted more than a week—was when his son was born on 16 June 1937. Into the small and homely park of the palace at Sofia poured townsmen and peasants alike. They had not dared to talk about the event before it happened, because of their superstition that jealous spirits might bring evil to mother and child. But as soon as 101 guns announced the birth of the Crown Prince Simeon, with the resultant remission of no less than £3,000,000 worth of taxation, fines, and so on, and a general holiday for everyone, the King's subjects, who consider themselves first and foremost his friends, brought presents of every kind, some of them very strange. There were flowers, sweets, and cakes, ponies for the baby to ride, weapons for him to use against Bulgaria's enemies, young animals of all sorts, and beautiful peasant embroideries. On that one day the Bulgarians forgot their reserve. They fired off every cartridge they possessed, put on their best clothes, and walked for days in order to be able to shout delighted greetings under the palace windows.

King Boris has the gift of making friends. He talks with enthusiasm of the people who interest him. When I first met him as the result of a letter from the Bulgarian Minister in London, who had been an effective member of the Government in Sofia, the King exclaimed: "I really think the Stancioffs are the nicest family in the world. They have all the talents!"

In the summer of 1938 he was staying at Blair Drummond with Sir Kay and Lady Muir—she was the brilliant Nadejda Stancioff, Lloyd George's interpreter at Lausanne, first of Europe's women diplomatists, secretary to the murdered Bulgarian genius and Prime Minister, Stamboliski, 'Inter-

national Kid' to Lord Bryce, and 'stormy Petrel of the Balkans' to a host of admiring politicians. The previous year King Boris had admired a small lake hidden somewhere in the hills. Nothing would satisfy him but that he must see it again. His Queen protested, but without much force, for to her everything Boris does is right. She is always saying : "He is so wonderful. I am so lucky to be married to him." But on this occasion, having lunched at one country-house with Queen Mary and had tea at another where there was some conflict of wills, for Boris wanted to see the garden and the indefatigable Queen Mary, also a guest, wished to inspect every room and every piece of furniture indoors, she did say : "We shall be late for dinner ! There really isn't time—" But the King decided there was—there must be ! So headlong they drove into the mountains, the harassed hostess wondering how long Queens took to dress and if there would be many cables reduced to chaos by the bewildered local post office. They found the lake. "Look, isn't it charming ?" said King Boris. "It's just as I remember—it hasn't changed at all."

Ruling a land ancient in greatness and in military history, King Boris, so young in spirit, so old himself in wisdom, has kept much affection for familiar tradition. He is happiest with the things and the people he knows. So I wonder if, in spite of the young Queen's artistry, the 'sociable' covered in faded yellow satin still stands square in the middle of the royal drawing-room at Varna ?

SEVEN



*KING GEORGE
OF GREECE*

KING GEORGE OF GREECE

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT I KNEW KING GEORGE OF GREECE VERY well before I had ever met him at all. But when as an exile he established himself at Brown's Hotel in London and became for all of us part of the ordinary dining-out and country-house life, I ceased to know him at all.

I think it was in the September of 1928 that my husband and I made a long journey through the Balkans. On his part it was official, for he was then the Colonel-in-Charge of one of the European Military Intelligence departments. On mine it was a holiday made the more delightful by Queen Marie's interest. To her I brought a letter of introduction from the English Princess Ghyka, who was the most vivid figure of immediate post-War London. We had done most things together, including driving an ambulance in our 'teens at the French front. "If you're going to Roumania, of course you must meet the Queen. Whatever you think, she is a very significant part of the country."

So when we reached Sinaia by way of a good many other countries, we went to the extraordinary German-Gothic hunting castle which King Ferdinand had set among the woods and hills. Madame Lahovary, accustomed to the Queen's interest in the friends of her friends, said : "Oh, no, you can't go away. I'm sure Her Majesty will want to see you. And tea—of course, you must have tea."

So far as I remember we did NOT have it because Queen Marie was so interested in talking about her friends all over Europe, and especially her son-in-law George who, she said, "was out of a job and therefore a good man wasted," that

she forgot to give us anything to eat or drink. There we sat on a couch covered with leopard skins and embroideries, in that Hollywood-esque castle which suited but did not at all overpower the Queen, beside a tea-table laden with agreeable things to eat and Marie—the beautiful, warm-hearted, preposterous woman who delighted in being a Queen—forgot all about it. She had the most wonderful hands I have ever seen. The knuckles did not project at all. The fingers were long and ivory-coloured. The shape of them showed strength. She wore an enormous sapphire and two pearls. Her dress was like a mediæval Abbess's robe, black and close-fitting with a long train. When she caught my hand and drew me impetuously after her into another sitting-room furnished more or less as an oratory and then into her bedroom, I had difficulty in not falling over her skirt. I have a memory of fabulous mosaics, of skins, crucifixes, rosaries, jewelled ikons, and a profusion of—was it dahlias, chrysanthemums, or marigolds? It was some vigorously orange flower, for that was the Queen's favourite colour. "It makes me feel warm and well," she said with emphasis. Her speech flowed with the energy of a mill-race. She was already, I suppose, on the way to being an old woman, but age had nothing whatever to do with her. She was the very spirit of enjoyment. "I have had such a lot of happiness," she said, "and battles too, of course, but that is all part of living." Her smile was a flame. She had no small, irritating poses. It may be that all her life was an act for which she staged a suitably dranatic background, but long before I met her, the part had become natural to her. It is customary now to criticize this English-and-Russian-born Balkan Queen for her love of display and her love of being admired, for her extravagance, her political ambitions, her business deals, and her plain speaking. But she did a great deal for the Allies by helping to bring Roumania into the War and still more for her own

country during its disastrous fight. She played a considerable part at the time of the Versailles Treaty, when Roumanian frontiers were unwisely extended to cover parts of Hungary and Bulgaria. Above all she was the sort of Queen the peasants liked. They looked upon her as a fairy-tale and when she wanted to build yet another Hans Andersen castle, they used to cut and haul the timber for it as a gift. "Why do you all like her so much?" I asked the Mayor of a mountain town. He looked at me as if I had questioned the divinity of Bethlehem's Mary. "Because she is so good," he replied.

As we swept through the rooms of that very much ornamented and carved castle at Sinaia, Queen Marie talked of her Greek son-in-law. "My daughter and he don't get on. It is a pity, but they are both rather obstinate. That is quite a good quality in a king, but not in a queen. George should never have left Greece—once you leave a country you are forgotten. The great thing is to stay in the capital and do things." This so exactly represented the philosophy of our hostess that I could not help laughing. "But it's true," she insisted. "Kings have got to be seen and talked about. It doesn't much matter what they do so long as it's a lot! Half our business in life is to provide conversation for our subjects."

During that same visit to Sinaia, we saw something of Princess Helen who had been King Carol's Queen. Her small son was then Michael the King, and she kept as much as possible in the background. I remember her always in the Roumanian national dress, white and red, intricately embroidered. She bore an infinity of misfortune with dignity and did not talk about it at all. She was hospitable and kind. My recollection is of a young, slight, sad woman with a well-shaped head and admirable features. She was definitely a lady of quality.

Like her quite irresistible mother, Queen Sophie, widow of the Greek King Constantine, she talked with the utmost simplicity. "Of course, George is unhappy," she said with

acquiescent grief. "How could he be anything else? If you are brought up and trained to be a king, you are no use for any other kind of work." She pursued the subject as if, for the moment; she had forgotten our presence. "Being a king means you are in a cage. You think you dislike it. You are impatient of its restrictions, but it is—I suppose—a protection. When it is gone, there is nothing else left for you." She smiled, but it was not very gay. "I suppose we are like all other spoiled creatures kept in cages! Let us out and we are defenceless. We don't know how to behave in a predatory world. We are too different and we cannot forget it." In those days I thought of Princess Helen as lovely and sad. But when I met her a few years later, an exile in London with her late husband reinstated on the throne and doing effective far-sighted work as Roumania's strong man, she said to me in a tired voice: "Sinaia seems like another life! What æons ago it was, and what happiness I had!"

The next time I heard of King George was in Epirus. I had been making a colour film in Albania, and from that charming southern town whose name I never can spell—it is something like Argirocastra—I crossed a few more hills into Greece. The peasants were not pleased to see us. They did not care for foreigners and they refused us lodging until I talked to them of their King whom I had just met in London. The response was extraordinary. There were smiles on every face. The sturdy independent farmers could not do enough for us. They placed piles of food and their best mattresses at our disposal. They talked as if the King was one of their own family and when we left they wanted us to take him gifts of eggs, chickens, meat on skewers, and all sorts of other perishable things.

That same autumn I met George of Greece a good deal, both in London and at country-houses where he shot. I found him a reserved and sensible young man, German rather

than Danish in character, for he has courage, foresight, political tact, and a good sense of values, but none of the charm which his cousins have brought to the courts of Europe. He appears to be slow of thought and speech, but he is well informed and practical and he does not attempt the impossible. He can be a good friend and also a 'good' enemy. The natural result of his upbringing, as nephew of the Kaiser, is that he admires success, efficiency, and good organization. He does not jump to conclusions, or precipitate himself into untenable positions. He thinks hard, makes up his mind, and then it is difficult to make him alter it, even if he is wrong. I should say his opinions were hard and fast, but no man ever adapted himself better to circumstances disastrous and prolonged. As an exile in London, he behaved with unimpeachable dignity and sound good sense. I remember when I asked him, at twenty-four hours' notice, to come to a party we were giving for our very new house, he said: "Yes, I'd love to, but no red carpet, please. I'm out of a job, so the less notice anybody takes of me the better pleased I am."

Arriving with a crowd of other guests, he slipped up the stairs, so much one of the rest that the most exquisite and punctilious of Ambassadors, Sir George Clark, who had just been shooting in Transylvania with the Roumanian Royal Family, feeling somebody pressing too close upon his heels, said over an admirably shaped shoulder: "Don't be in such a hurry, young man—you'll get there in time!"

I hope that King George enjoyed being in London. He had many friends. He met every kind of person and he never for one instant suggested either that he missed the perquisites of a throne or that any of them were due to him. Returning from numberless parties, he would say to the people who had given him a lift: "I'm not going to take you out of your way. Drop me here at the corner and I'll walk up to Brown's Hotel."

I believe the thing he missed most was a car of his own.

For when 'things,' as he said, 'got a little better' and—at the time of Princess Marina's engagement—he was able to procure a small Daimler, he drove himself up to Scotland to stay on Tayside with the late Sir Cecil Hanbury. After that it seemed to me he drove just anywhere, alone, or with anyone he could persuade into the next seat, whenever he was not shooting. "It's a tremendous pleasure," he said, "just driving—and it makes me feel free!"

It is foolish that of all the conversations I must have had with King George during the years he dined with us and a host of other acquaintances in London, I can remember none of importance. He was a good friend to England. He was sincerely democratic so far as any king can be something which is so entirely contrary to his traditions, but he did not suffer his political opponents gladly.

I remember two discussions in Scotland which seemed to me characteristic. It was before Hitler and Stalin, representing the worst evils of the force philosophy, had made it necessary for the democracies to think seriously of war. At the time, although appreciating the value—indeed the necessity—of a king as the centre of imperial unity, I inclined to the idea that monarchy as a principle was out of date. I had met some effective, hard-working Presidents who, because they had lived most of their lives among ordinary people, were far closer in touch with their versions of 'Main Street' than any king could be. But George of Greece, to whom I propounded the theory, disagreed with vigour. "A President," he said, "must always be affected by politics. He has to consider his popularity and to legislate with an eye on the next elections."

"Perhaps there could be Life-Presidents," I intrerupted.

But George took no notice. "Kings can be completely unbiassed. They have nothing to gain or to lose——"

"But they HAVE!" I interpolated, "in England—no—that is true—and perhaps in one or two other constitutional

countries, certainly in Belgium and Holland. But in Spain, in the Balkans, and even in Italy, I expect, the Kings are obliged to cherish the Party which wishes to keep them on the throne. As soon as a monarchy ceases to be accepted as a matter of course by everyone, it becomes as much a subject of intrigue as any political appointment."

"I don't agree," said George of Greece. "A king makes for stability. He can look at politics from an impersonal angle. His whole life has been a lesson-book on one subject . . . the country he is going to rule. He must therefore be better informed and a more effective influence for internal peace than any ministry."

"But he never hears anything first-hand," I protested, and I quoted Alphonso of Spain who, a few weeks before his flight, when everyone I met in the army or the Church, in cafés and colleges and the drawing-rooms of Madrid, suspected what was going to happen, insisted that all danger was over. His family repeated it to me at the Escurial in Madrid when my husband and I were motoring through on our way to Portugal. "Tell them in England it's all right now. The throne is safe," said a near relation, living in the palace. That was not more than a fortnight before the revolution.

I quoted this to King George and he shrugged his shoulders. "You mustn't judge by exceptions," he said. But still I argued: "A king can send for anyone he likes to give an account of personal experiences or impressions, but he cannot go out and learn things for himself." As an unimportant instance I quoted our own wise, sensible, and well-informed King George, who always used to say to me that only one person had ever been to Mecca—because he imagined that Colonel Lawrence had told him so. In vain I listed the forty-two known travellers whose journeys have been recorded, the greater number by Professor Hogarth. The King was unimpressed. "You must be mistaken," he said.

I don't remember the end of my discussion with George of Greece. We both got rather cross. Fuel was added to our discord by the fact that I thought of the Cretan Venizelos as a mistaken patriot with a dream, for which he had unpardonably sacrificed many thousands of Grecian lives,¹ while the King naturally considered him a traitor.

The arguments which the King of Greece put forward have proved right so far as his own country is concerned. He did not want to go back there unless an honest vote showed that the people were anxious for a restoration. He told his English friends : "It may only last six months, who knows, but while it lasts, I shall be a prisoner, so you must come and see me. I won't have time or money to come to England." Yet he has succeeded in a very difficult task. With the iron General Metaxas behind him—a Mussolini in the background—he has stabilized his country's position. She is now a respected and reliable member of the Balkan block, and if Metaxas leans to Germany because he has many connections with that country and greatly admires its success, the King holds the balance even. In this he has shown considerable courage and determination.

The second slight conversation I remember took place on a cold and wet moor during a shooting lunch. Princess Marina's engagement had just been announced. All England was longing to hear about her. Her most distant cousins were of the utmost desirability as news. George of Greece had been pursued by reporters before he came to Perthshire. Then there was peace. But—suddenly and without warning—on the doorstep of Arisaig appeared a small forlorn figure with a very big camera. He had come all the way from Aberdeen. He was hungry and he'd walked from the station. A footman turned him away, "and make the going quick," he said. In the middle of the drive I met the man looking hungrier than ever and dejected as well. He said : "D'you think there's

¹ The invasion of Asia Minor after the 1914-1918 war.

any chance of my getting a snap on the Q.T.? I don't mind how long I wait." There was something solid about him. He reminded me of endless Britons on the defence against ridiculous odds, but with no chance of success, taking it all as a matter of course. "Not the slightest," I said. "The King's out shooting and we're just going to join him at lunch."

"I've been offered a lot for just one photograph," said the man, "and I need it." He didn't bring in any appeal to sentiment, but I felt he was speaking the truth. "All right," I said. "You can walk up with me if you like. It's miles away and the King may not agree, but I'll ask him for you. Do you want to take the chance?"

"Yes," said the man.

We tramped through bogs and over heather. It rained. The camera weighed heavier and heavier, but we got there at last. On a singularly exposed slope, lunch was laid under rowan bushes. The guns were just crossing the last burn. Loaders and stops were gathered on the sky-line. With some trepidation I approached the King. "Of course," he said, but he was not pleased. The small man got what he called 'an intimate picture' and a surreptitious lunch.

The King, sitting damply beside me, said: "The Press are an infernal nuisance. They never leave one alone. They ought to be abolished." And that was the beginning of another argument. "For," said I, "if you abolished the Press there wouldn't be a king left. It is the papers who make all of you into the most wonderful and popular people. They turn ordinary kings into heroes and they cover up all your mistakes. Think of the adjectives they devote to you and the tact with which they leave out anything which might sound as if you ever just pleased or amused yourselves. Why, you owe everything to the Press!"

George disagreed, but I don't remember that he routed me. The argument became muffled in sausage rolls and pastries.

The last time I saw the King of Greece was under the wing

of a gigantic K.L.M. air-liner a moment after it had landed in Athens. With his brother, Prince Paul, he had come to meet a cousin travelling by the same plane. "But I didn't think I'd see you in Greece," he said to me. "You are a most unexpected person."

It was very soon after his restoration and he assured us he had "no furniture to speak of—I believe there are six pairs of cotton sheets and two tea-pots. That's all! So I have to do my entertaining at the hotel."

'The big royal palace,' wrote Prince Christopher of Greece in his *Memoirs*, '—the cardboard box—as I called it in the days of my irreverent youth—had been confiscated after our second exile and turned into the Chamber of Deputies, so he¹ went into residence in the palace that had belonged to his father and which, during the dictatorship of Venizelos, had been used for official receptions and State banquets. Consequently it was only half furnished and it would have been better if it had been completely empty for what furniture and decorations there were, were singularly hideous. There were no guest-rooms and the King had to sit on his trunks in the corridor while a bedroom was prepared for him. It was not very easy going in those first months after the Restoration and he worked himself to the bone . . . literally, for he was a solidly proportioned youth when he went back, and now he is as thin as a stick.'

'No king sits too securely on his throne in these days, but personally I have every confidence in the future of Greece. King George has all the qualities that make a good king. He is sincere, level-headed, and determined without being dogmatic. He has my father's sense of fair-play and his capacity for always being able to see the other fellow's point of view, and he knows just when to concede and when to stand firm. Although his reign has so far been by no means plain sailing he has made himself both liked and respected.'

¹ King George.

EIGHT



*THE LATE
KING ALEXANDER
OF YUGO-SLAVIA*

KING ALEXANDER OF YUGO-SLAVIA

IN THE SUMMER OF 1929, AFTER TRAVELLING THROUGH Macedonia which is the Ireland of the Balkans and exaggeratedly nationalist, although it does not exist on any map, I came to Monastir in Southern Serbia. The Governor invited me to dinner and the officer who brought the invitation told me "You are fortunate. You will meet the King."

A month or two earlier Pavlevitch, the Croat leader—patriot or revolutionary according to the point of view, but the terms are synonymous east of the Adriatic—had been tried and executed in Belgrade. His secret society had sworn to revenge him. On their national flag, held in place by a revolver, a knife, and a cross, the youth of Catholic Croatia, with a heritage of civilization older than the Hapsburg empire, swore to fight to the death 'for the liberation of our people reduced to slavery.' Simultaneously, the Macedonian Revolutionary Committee were terrorizing the South. King Alexander must have known this, yet—at the height of the Macedonian excesses—he lingered at Monastir.

At dinner in the simple, sparsely furnished house, where Alexander had had a big and shabby desk placed in front of a window because he liked space and light when he started to work in the early hours before breakfast, he said: "It is impossible to bother about death. That is a matter which concerns no one till the moment it happens."

I remember the Governor looked concerned. For Alexander ruled some thirteen and a half million forcible and decided Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Slavones, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Bosnians, and Dalmatians, with some Turks and Armenians.

Among them were several different religions accustomed to hostility, and as many languages, each with a national significance.

I remember Alexander as a tired, thin-lipped man with grey hair and heavy, rather straight, dark eyebrows. His face was full of character. He could be hard, but in an intelligent manner. He cared nothing about his own life or his appearance. His uniform looked as if it had seen much service. His handkerchief was darned. The high forehead of a student contrasted with the deep lines scarred between nose and mouth. He talked, as a soldier, about the Macedonians who, with bombs and rifles, were demanding what amounted to autonomy within their mythical borders. They had certain honest grievances, for Yugo-Slavia at that time was trying to make good Serbian citizens out of villagers who wanted to talk their own language, have their own churches and schools, raise and spend their own taxes, and spell their names with 'ov' instead of 'itch.'

"In a new country, the only thing which matters is unity," said the King. "Force is not always the best weapon, but there are occasions when it must be used. Nationalism to-day is as dangerous as dynamite. The Balkans suffer from excessive individualism. In Yugo-Slavia we have all the ingredients for a first-class explosion. It is my business to prevent it."

Before dinner we had drunk the excellent *slivovitch* made in the country, but the King did not finish his glass. He put it down to light a cigarette and after that he seemed to me to smoke all the time. When the meal came to an end we sat in solid wooden chairs and drank a great deal of coffee. The King's cup was re-filled as soon as it was empty. The Governor talked of the Macedonian Comitadjis who came down from their mountains to get food and ammunition from sympathizers in the neighbourhood of Monastir. "There is a *café* here which they use as a meeting-place," he said.

"Let us go to it," said the King, "I should like some more coffee."

I have never seen a man look more surprised than the Governor. His face became a sheet of blank paper. In Serbian he protested. For a few minutes the room was full of protest. Subdued by respect and hampered by amazement, it beat against the imperturbable King. Then we were all on our feet and shortly afterwards in two cars driving through the Moslem part of the town. In the daytime I had seen turbaned figures in the long robes of Ali Baba seated beside their open-fronted shops which—after the fashion of the East—could be shut up at night like cupboards flat in a wall. But the streets and lanes were comparaitvely empty after sunset, and the Governor, who sat facing the King with a dismayed and speechless officer, explained: "There has been so much trouble. The police do not encourage anyone to go about late unless he has important business."

There were a number of men gathered round the cafe entrance. Their talk ceased as we arrived. They drew back and stared. Then they bunched together round the door. Into the café walked the King followed by silence and consternation. He sat down at the first empty table. It happened to be near a wall, but Alexander pushed his chair to one side so that he provided an easy target. The room was nearly full and few of the dark, shaggy men drinking a colourless spirit looked to me like townsfolk. The lights were inadequate and at first the waiters were so surprised that there seemed to be a cessation of all movement. Then several men got up and went out.

"My father" (King Peter) "used often to sit in the cafés with his friends. He liked to feel in touch with the people." The King spoke in his ordinary voice. When he was tired or overworked, it sounded abrupt. "My neighbour, Boris,¹

¹ King of Bulgaria.

talks with everyone he meets in the street. I should think he has exchanged ideas with most of his subjects at some time or another. It may be a good thing. But I really haven't time and it adds to the work of the police. They have enough to do here already."

Coffee was brought by a man whom I imagined to be the proprietor. He disappeared as soon as he had served it. The King lit one cigarette after another. "I don't see your Comitadjis," he told the Governor.

"I hope not, Your Majesty," said that unfortunate man, his head turning as if it were a corkscrew as he tried to look in all directions at once.

"I doubt if they would shoot me here," said the King, as if he were considering a mathematical problem. He talked seriously and simply, his clean-shaven face in sharp contrast to the thickets of hair at the other tables. He said: "Royalty is much like any other Trades Union. It has its rules. I suppose kings are more important to themselves than to anyone else. No doubt we over-rate our importance. For kings, of course, are interested in other kings. When one disappears, the Union is weakened. Our work carries an enormous amount of perquisites, but we are penalized like other superior craftsmen by the fact that we must always behave as we are expected to do. We can't go on strike. We must, if necessary, provide revolution with the necessary corpses. In life we are certainly cherished above our merits, but we never know when we are expected to die."

Shivers ran down my spine. From where I sat, I could see little but a long counter at the end of the room. There was little movement. I imagined the shabby, lean men sweating while they watched and waited. "To my mind," said Alexander, "there is no third course open to us. A king must be either on a throne or in a coffin—a successful shot separates the two."

I remembered how the Kings of Serbia had died. 'Black George,' the Haiduk or bandit chief from which the Kara-georgeovitch dynasty is descended, liberated his country from the Turks in 1810. He is said to have killed his father and brother and he was himself assassinated. The Obrenovitch rulers, another Alexander and his wife Draga, a shopkeeper's daughter, were murdered in their bedroom by a group of officers belonging to the Black Hand.

"There is only one thing a king cannot do and that is run away," said the man who arrogated to himself the Dictatorship of Yugo-Slavia. It was said without ostentation, for Alexander had no poses of any kind. He was primarily a soldier and as such the equal of anyone in Europe.

Serbia saw him as a young Napoleon when he defeated the Turks in 1913 and subsequently drove the Bulgars in confusion across the frontier which they ought never to have crossed. The Austrian invasion of 1914 found him at the head of men who are born fighters. He had no nerves. He never moved by a hair's breadth to escape a bullet. He never joked because his race does not laugh in the face of death. They accept it with dignity when they have fought to the last bullet. Alexander, I think, was always quite friendly with death. They had a mutual respect for each other!

After their first soberly carried out retreat, the Serbs turned and swept the Austrians off the face of their country. In a ramshackle old car at the head of a fighting army went old King Peter, standing up on occasions and leaning over the torn hood to shout "Faster! Faster!" In the first rank was Alexander, young, grave, determined.

With soldiers he was at his best, for his was a disciplined nature. He appreciated order, force, and courage. His father used to say: "We are peasants. All my ancestors were peasants. I am prouder of that than of being king, but I don't need a parliament to tell me how to rule, any more than

my grandfather needed a herdsman to tell him how to look after his cows. A parliament is for company and Ministers for decoration!"

His second son Alexander—Regent for some years before he became King and never crowned because he did not like ceremonies—was probably prouder of being a soldier than of the throne which he treated as a desk. Because he was a soldier making a fetish of unity and discipline, he could not compromise with the loose fabrication of violent and dissident interests which had suddenly decided—or been induced—to call itself Yugo-Slavia. In the café at Monastir where—at any moment—a bullet might have put an end to his vision of a solid Balkan block united against the ambitions of Italy and of a Hungary encouraged by Germany, he said : "Kings must be the first Internationalists." But I found sufficient spirit—in spite of the fog of gloom in which we sat—to protest : "The Balkans are all too fiercely concerned with their own personal affairs to think on an international basis." And I told him how I had seen the most intelligent woman in Europe happily cutting out the eyes of a newspaper photograph. It represented the Prime Minister of a neighbouring country enriched by Versailles at the expense of her own.

"All these national enmities are childish," said Alexander, sighing. "They belong to the days of savagery. We *must* get away from them. If I live long enough, I may, with the help of Boris, who is far more popular than I am, make some sort of unity in the Balkans. I daresay if I am killed, he and Paul *may* have more chance of success—but my cousin wants to die in his bed! That is unnatural in the Balkans and it may hamper him. Eventually Germany may provide the cement we need, for if she is ever able to make another war, we here must not waste time in fighting against each other."

As we left the café—amidst complete silence—the King stood aside for me to go out of the door first. I wondered

if that would be his last moment. Alexander must have noticed my expression: "It is waste of time to be afraid," he said.

Time was always of great importance to this royal Dictator. When he dissolved his last not at all 'companionable' parliament, the ordinary people acclaimed him. They were tired of wrangling politicians and—for the moment—of their own grievances. But with the supreme power, unquestioned in a dangerous isolation, he began to underestimate the nationalist or liberal movements within his most complicated country. As King, he had argued with Stepan Raditch, the Croat visionary and patriot subsequently murdered in the parliament at Zagreb: "Democracy should be allied to the principle of monarchy. They cannot logically be separated. For the people have the right to follow their chosen leader."

The suggestion seemed to me Jesuitical and I had some sympathy with Raditch's retort: "Then no king can rule two countries."

As Dictator, Alexander did not argue at all.

Croats and Slavs are fundamentally different. The first have a long heritage of culture weakened by the very traditions which are its pride. They do battle with words, finding the final expression of force in an unplanned murder or the grim imagery of a secret society. The second are a simple, violent peasant people without complexities except a tendency to treat politics as a national sport. It may be that like the Irish and the English they are too different ever to understand each other's point of view. If so, Alexander's Dictatorship was wasted.

I doubt if he enjoyed it. He had a sense of permanence in the matter of royal power. He looked upon it as a responsibility as well as a weapon, but he did not, I think, regard it as an intimate and personal matter. He was a very rich man, but except for his fleet of enormous American cars and his library

which contained, I am told, more than twenty thousand books, he had few possessions. He liked living at his farm and discussing vine culture. He knew a great deal about vines and was interested in the local wines, although he drank little.

My husband and I motored out one day from Belgrade to spend the afternoon at Topola, which was little more than a couple of villas set in the midst of vineyards. In one of the small white houses, furnished at that time with wickerwork and English chintzes, lived King Alexander and Queen Marie, daughter of Marie of Roumania. In the other, surrounded by guards, with a sentry at every window, lived the boy who is now King Peter the Second, his brothers, and their governess. It seemed to me a terrible life for children, and I hoped they did not realize what the presence of so many soldiers portended. Prince Peter was playing with soldiers when his mother took us across a strip of new garden to see her sons. He asked her a lot of questions about machinery, for somebody had given him an engine which would not go. "My transport is held up," he said.

Our visit had begun with a mistake which, at the time, the Queen thought amusing.

"I am so very sorry we are late, Ma'am," I said, "but our driver imagined you were living up there on the hill." I pointed to a glaring and grandiose building with domes and coloured tiles.

"We probably shall be soon——" said the Queen. "It's the morgue."

Not very long afterwards, Alexander's bullet-ridden body, brought back from Marseilles, lay in state in the newly completed mausoleum.

Our hostess was quite as outspoken as her impetuous mother, to whom Roumania's Prime Minister paid a tribute of understanding when he said to me: "Après tout—c'est elle la royauté!" I thanked her for having received us at

Topola and she retorted with a half smile : " Well, my mother told me I must."

We had come from Roumania and had seen enough of the older Queen Marie in her spectacular castles to fall victim—in spite of our previous judgments—to her charm, her warmth of friendship, and her genuine delight in giving pleasure.

" I shall never be as good a Queen as she is," said the daughter impulsively. " You see, I really don't like clothes." She was wearing grey flannel, cut quite straight, and a solid hair-net. Her face was unpowdered. She looked healthy and vital. " I am glad you came—now," she said, " you must have tea. English people always want tea, don't they ? " But she wouldn't eat anything herself.

Sitting behind a simple china tea-pot, instead of the silver birds, partridges, I think, out of which her mother used to dispense tea when she remembered, Queen Marie talked about her husband. She evidently admired him very much. " He works so hard," she said, " and they bother him so much. He hardly has a moment these days—and they're always trying to shoot him. He doesn't mind, but sometimes it does interrupt his work."

The Queen spoke as if assassination were influenza. She was quite as brave as her husband and she had a sensible gaiety that went well with her appearance. For she was not at all beautiful, but her smile was like her conversation. I thought it would be very pleasant to live with her. She said : " I really don't know much about politics. I have the children to look after and the houses and the vines. You'd better come and see them."

We walked along an unfinished terrace and down the hill-side to where the neat pruned trees were an ordered tide upon the brown of the earth. The Queen was telling us how her husband used to argue with his fellow-farmers at the Vini-cultors' annual dinner, when there was a violent explosion

and a portion of the hill-side blew up within a few yards of our feet. I don't know what I did. I think I was too frightened to do anything. Even my husband dropped his cigarette. From the house came an officer running at full speed. Soldiers with rifles in their hands appeared suddenly in the garden. Only the Queen remained unmoved. She completed the sentence she had begun. Then she said, with cheerful interest, "I wonder if they are dynamiting for my new vineyard—or it might be a bomb. I'll ask."

A panting A.D.C. brought apologies and unnecessary reassurance. The charge of dynamite had been bigger than was intended. "Well, I don't see how we're going to get the vines planted now," said the Queen, peering into the chasm. "It's too steep."

The last sight we had of her was running down the steps of the villa after we had said good-bye. "Wait! Wait!" she called to us, for we were already in the car. "It's late and you'll be cold driving back to Belgrade. Look, I've brought you a coat." She held it out to my husband and then ran on across the garden to the closely guarded house where her boys played with soldiers.

"My mother brought us up very well," she had said to us while she watched us having tea. "We were never allowed to make a fuss."

This absence of 'fuss' characterized every action of Alexander and his wife. They played bridge together without any of the usual marital arguments. They travelled in the simplest fashion they could contrive. They were always guarded, but they managed to give the impression that they did not notice it. Without 'fuss,' Alexander proposed to establish Balkan stability based on a revision of the Treaty of Versailles. That was possible as well as sensible. But, also without 'fuss,' he hoped to unite Macedonians, Croats, and Serbs. For this purpose he changed his appearance and his

character. "I want to be the first typical Yugo-Slavian," he said. It would have been a good type, for Alexander hid nothing and feared nothing. He was honest, hard, opinionated, and direct. One joke I heard him make. "My enemies are always shooting at me and I can't retaliate. So I force them to listen while I talk. That is my only privilege!"

Without 'fuss'—indeed with a very faint smile as if he were a little amused and also a little contemptuous—King Alexander died as he saluted the crowds in Marseilles. For a little while his country was united.

NINE



SIR BASIL ZAHAROFF

SIR BASIL ZAHAROFF

“YOU'RE NOT TO WRITE A SINGLE WORD ABOUT ME UNTIL after I'm dead,” said Sir Basil Zaharoff. “Promise or I won't talk.”

It was September, 1931, and I was staying with the man of mystery in the Avenue Hoche. Truth to tell, I was half suffocated, for the room was kept at a tropical temperature and all the windows were shut. Every evening after dinner we used to sit in this small study. All the lights were turned out, but a glimmer came through the open door of Sir Basil's bedroom, hung with yellow brocade which had belonged to the Empress Eugénie.

“I think better and I remember better when it is dark,” said the world's greatest adventurer. He was the waxen effigy of a man, very tired, very quiet, with a small, sharply pointed white beard no more colourless than his face. He was surrounded by a few beautiful things, jewelled treasures of the Empire, but many of his possessions had recently been burned when his house mysteriously caught fire. He had not troubled to replace them, although every day the antiquaries of Paris sent him priceless bronzes, marbles, and boiseries in the hopes that he would buy.

“Is it true that your diaries have been destroyed?” I asked.

“Yes,” said my host in a gentle somnolent voice. “I burned them myself. There was too much trouble in them. I put them into the kitchen stove and I ruined my best umbrella ramming them down. It took all day to burn them and my

daughter came in just as it was finished and was furious with me. She tried to pull out the last pages and they fell on the floor charred.

“There is only one page of my life I want to remember,” said Sir Basil, and in the gloom he picked up a photograph of his wife. The room was full of them. There must have been twenty or thirty, but they all showed the Duchess as a young woman with the tiny waist and wide skirts of last century throwing snowballs made of cotton-wool, holding a sealskin muff against her tiers of curls, or riding—archly—with tightly gloved hands tucked into her waist. Zaharoff couldn’t bear to think of his wife growing old.

“Would you like to know how I met her? It was on the stairs of the Escurial Palace in Madrid.” I knew those great white double stairs lined by the white-cloaked Halberdiers of the Guard, so I could picture the scene. “There had been a reception and as we were leaving, I noticed a girl in front of me. I didn’t know who she was, but she had the loveliest and the saddest face I’d ever seen. The man with her was covered with orders and I noticed people drew aside to let them pass. Suddenly the man took the girl’s arm brutally and crushed it—she gave a little cry and before I knew what I was doing I’d hit him across the face. It was Don Francesco de Bourbon, Duke of Marchena, and the girl was his nineteen-year-old wife. Imagine the commotion! I’d struck a Prince of the Blood, cousin of the King of Spain, merely because he’d been rude to his own wife. Next day there was a duel and I was wounded. Don Francesco was a good swordsman and I’d plenty of time to consider my folly in hospital. I’d been there a fortnight and was condemned to another week or so when they told me a lady wanted to see me. She wouldn’t give her name and she was so thickly veiled I could hardly even see the shape of her face, but I’d have known her anywhere. It was the Princess for whom I’d fought. She was

very kind and very reproving, but she let out that she and her husband were going away that night. She had come to say good-bye—but we never said that word.

“ In spite of my wound I bribed my way out of the hospital and on to her train. I had her carriage filled with flowers. I managed to speak to her while the Duke was engaged and after that wherever she went she found my flowers waiting for her. We loved each other for thirty years and then at last her husband died and we were able to marry. King Alphonso made me a Spanish Duke, but I never used the title. It was no use to me. We were very happy, too happy perhaps——” His voice trailed into silence.

The Duchess only lived eighteen months after her marriage, but she left her husband two Bourbon daughters who regard him as a father. In fact Princess Angèle runs, most capably, his farm at a castle just outside Paris and provides most of the delicacies dished up on the famous golden service which cost a million sterling and took ten years to make. The chief pieces have pedestals of lapis lazuli. There are no flowers on the table. The gold and the blue are sufficient decoration, but outside the windows are what Sir Basil calls his ‘hanging gardens’—balconies full of plants and creepers arranged round the little court into which most of the windows open, for the house in the Avenue Hoche keeps its secrets from the world. In that dining-room I heard President Doumergue dismiss England from her place among the great nations because of “the ludicrous social and economic experiments of the Labour Government which will surely ruin her.”

Sir Basil disagreed. He was very wise when he was not dreaming with Venizelos of Alexander’s Thracian road to Asia. But the President of the French insisted. “ England is finished. Economically she cannot recover. We must look elsewhere for support.” He spoke with regret.

I heard Clemenceau repeat his famous stricture on the Treaty

of Versailles : "Here is the basis of a just and durable war," and add that within my lifetime England and France would fight together again for the same purpose, but he hoped with more sensible results. I heard the refunding of the Ottoman debt discussed by men who regretted the fez and disliked their new uncomfortable bowlers. At times I was politely dismissed with : "My dear, would you not like to use the motor this afternoon ?" This happened, I remember, when an emissary of the Bank of England came to ask the richest man in Europe if he would assist towards the maintenance of the gold standard by leaving a million in bullion in the London vaults.

"What nationality are you ?" I asked Sir Basil during one of those long evenings when the stillness was only broken by his dry comments and recollections.

"I've almost forgotten," he said. "I was born in Greece. My father was of Polish origin. My mother was French with a Levantine strain. I have a British order and a Spanish title. I've travelled on Turkish, Danish, and Swiss passports. During the War I went into Germany to discover certain things which Lloyd George and Clemenceau wanted to know, in the uniform of a Bulgarian doctor. I paid heavily for that uniform and the man who sold it died. Well, I got the information and I was in the train making for the frontier when to my horror I noticed that a German officer, sitting opposite, hardly ever took his eyes off me. For three solid hours I was obliged to remain there with his eyes boring into me. Whenever I looked up I found him staring at me and certain papers in the lining of my coat began to burn a hole in my chest. At last, when the frontier was at hand, I could bear it no longer. I asked him why he was so interested in my appearance. 'Herr doktor,' he said, twisting his moustache, 'you must pardon me if I annoy you, but you are exactly like my sister's husband who has been reported

missing.' God in heaven! I could have kissed the man on both cheeks I was so relieved!"

Sir Basil stretched himself out in his chair as if the worst hours in his life had only just ended. "I wired to the Quai d'Orsai, of course, as soon as I was over the frontier, and when I reached Paris all I thought of was driving straight home to a bath—I hadn't had one for a fortnight—but the station-master was on the look out for me. 'There is someone who wants to see you,' he said with much mystery, and led me to the official waiting-room where Clemenceau threw himself into my arms and kissed me as I had wished to kiss that fantastic German. When we had talked he said: 'Now you must go over at once and tell Lloyd George. He is waiting for you.' 'But, my friend,' I protested, 'I must have a bath first.' 'You can have your bath in London,' he said, and I was hurried into the first train with a new order in my button-hole, to be greeted in London by Mr. Lloyd George with the G.C.B. in his pocket. They say that the information I brought ended the War."

Sir Basil talked thus calmly of the mightiest international events. He claims he is the only man who resisted the fascination of Queen Marie. "She came to see me in this house when Roumania wanted a loan. She had lovely hands, but my wife's were even more beautiful. She sat in that chair where you are sitting with her veil thrown back looking like a nun who'd eaten an apple off the tree of knowledge, but I said only that I would consider the matter. I can see her now sweeping out of the door so sure of herself that she said: 'We will send a train for you.' 'It may be that I shall not come.' 'You will,' she said."

"And did you go?"

"Yes, but I kept the royal train which King Ferdinand sent from Bucharest waiting for forty-eight hours while I made up my mind."

There is one person whom Sir Basil has never been able to resist—Venizelos. I asked the great financier, who has juggled with Balkan thrones, made and unmade frontiers, what was the dream of his life. “Adventure,” he replied. “When I was a boy I refused to work seriously in my father’s shipping office. I used to go down to the docks and listen to sailors’ tales. At first it was the sea I wanted. I’ve sailed my own boats from Athens to the coasts of Africa. Then it was excitement. I’ve seen ships scuttled for the sake of the insurance. I made my first hundreds gun-running for savages. I made wars so that I could sell arms to both sides. I must have sold more arms than anyone else in the world. How did I do it? By flattering the wife or mistress of the Minister in Power. As a very young man I realized there is always a woman behind the public personage. I contrived an introduction to her, sent her flowers or jewels, courted her, and eventually sold whatever I wanted to her husband or lover! There was a time when I wanted money and I made it. One contract alone brought me in several millions.”

I begged for more details of his extraordinary life. Sir Basil retorted: “But I’ve told you—I was always either running away from school or office, or running after opportunity!” In a ruminative voice, thickened by memories, he continued: “We were poor and my father could only send me to an ordinary Greek school. I suppose I was educated somehow when I wasn’t at sea. For a time I went into business with my uncle, a merchant—I make profits for him but not for myself. For three years I worked really hard for this uncle. He was always promising to pay me and eventually he did make me a partner, but I got no money. At last I could stand it no longer. I drew up an exact account of the balance due to me, went to the bank, drew the money, and left for Britain.”

A smile altered the shape of Sir Basil’s lips. He fingered

his beard and continued : " My uncle pursued me with an action. I was arrested and brought up for trial in London. My position was desperate, for I could not find the letter of partnership. I imagined myself already in prison. It was with one exception the worst moment of my life. My uncle was astute. He loved money better than any member of his family, so I had no hope of his relenting. I wondered how many years I would have to waste in prison. Then as I walked along the cold corridors to the court with my hands in my pockets because they were half frozen, I felt a paper. Automatically I pulled it out and looked at it. There was my uncle's letter making me his partner ! "

With triumph in his voice, Sir Basil said : " I produced the letter in court. My uncle admitted its validity. The case broke down. My innocence was established and I was free. But I had a lot of ups-and-downs in the next few years before I got the job of Balkan representative for the Anglo-Swedish firm of Nordenfelt."

He told how he went around Europe and Asia canvassing orders for Nordenfelt, the man who made weapons of war, time-fuses, quick-firing guns, and finally the submarine. " One day I heard a Monsieur Maxim was going to demonstrate a new machine-gun in Vienna," said Zaharoff. " The tests took place. The Press was enthusiastic. Somebody said : ' A great performance for the Nordenfelt gun. Nobody else can compete. '

“ ‘ Nordenfelt ? ’ asked one of the Pressmen. ‘ Isn’t the inventor Hiram Maxim ? ’ ‘ Oh no,’ replied the man. ‘ That is the Nordenfelt gun, the finest weapon in the world.’ It was I who had arranged this deception. Maxim was furious, but he forgave me, and from that trick emerged a new armaments firm—Maxim and Nordenfelt. When friction developed between the partners I chose the stronger man. I went with Maxim and joined Vickers. After that I worked and worked.

I sold armaments to anyone who would buy them. I was a Russian when in Russia, a Greek in Greece, a Frenchman in Paris. And all the time I bought shares in the firm for which I was working. I was rich, but I worked for my riches. If one door was closed, there was always another I could use."

With the Balkans in revolt against the Turks, Zaharoff booked order after order. "I sold a submarine to the Greeks. And then," he added, with a chuckle, "I went to the Turks and sold them a couple."

He told me quietly and in a matter-of-fact way how armament firms, branches of his own, were set up in almost every country in the world.

Then came the Great War and his amazing career as a salesman of death reached its zenith. "I had always known my price," he said. "Now I became of inestimable value in the Councils of the Allies. 'Arms, arms, and still more arms,' they demanded—and I could supply them. It brought me enormous wealth, but I wanted more. And one thing I wanted above all the gold in the world!" His voice dropped. "To see Greece a great power, mistress of the Thracian road to the East.

"You asked me once what was the happiest day of my life —well, I'll tell you. It was during the Peace Conference. A famous English politician had come to see me. He was leaning against that table in the hall waiting for his hat, when he said to me, as if it were nothing: 'So it's your birthday to-day, is it? Well, go along and tell your friend Venizelos that I make you a present of Asia Minor.'"

That present cost Greece 100,000 lives, and Zaharoff who knows how many millions, for Mustapha Kemal conjured an army out of Anatolian rocks and drove the troops, financed by Sir Basil and armed by the Allies, out of Smyrna. The road to the East was closed to Greece, but the man of mystery

weaving his webs in Paris and the Prime Minister who became Dictator in Athens, continued the friendship formed when they were boys together seeking work on the docks. "Venezelos is the cleverest man in the Middle East," said Zaharoff, and added the next moment: "It may be that Titulesco¹ is cleverer, but I shan't live to know."

Sir Basil takes many secrets to the grave. Nobody will know why—having secured for a country which during the War was pro-German, the position and perquisites of an Ally—he chose deliberately to destroy the popular Grecian throne. "Kings are out of date," said Zaharoff. He had married a Spanish princess, YET at a moment when his money could have saved the Royalist Party in Spain, he refused its help.

"I believe in the dictatorship of brains and ability, not of chance," he explained. "I admire power which is secret and does not advertise itself, for above all things, I detest publicity. People know this and try to blackmail me. The other day a new author sent me the manuscript of a book containing all sorts of nonsense about me, and asked if I would buy it. I returned it with the words: 'Monsieur Zaharoff regrette qu'il ne s'intéresse pas dans la musique. Il ne peut pas chanter.'²

Whenever I left the closed house in the Avenue Hoche, whenever the disjointed reminiscences with which Sir Basil who slept very little, enlivened the midnight hours, came to an end, my host wrapped in a black cloak which made him look more eighteenth century than ever, would point a waxen-white finger at me and repeat: "Now, remember, not a word until I'm dead."

¹ Then Prime Minister of Roumania.

² Mr. Zaharoff regrets that music (in slang, 'commotion, fuss') doesn't interest him. He cannot sing (in slang, 'be bribed').

TEN

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TWO PRESIDENTS OF TURKEY
ATATURK AND ISMET INEUNU

TWO PRESIDENTS OF TURKEY—ATATURK AND ISMET INEUNU

IN PARIS A THOUSAND JOURNALISTS HUNG UPON THE WORDS of a handful of men seated round an immense mahogany table. It was the Peace Conference which made war—indeed many wars—a certainty. Clemenceau's impatient summing-up of the situation is well known—“I knew I ought to do something. I saw irrevocable mistakes being made, but what could I do? Every man there was exhausted and embittered. No one could see another country's point of view—some did not even know its place on the map. I was faced with men who hadn't any knowledge of Europe, who wanted to be safe and to sleep. The only ones with any energy remaining were Lloyd George and Wilson. One thought himself Napoleon and the other Jesus Christ !”

The Treaty of Sèvres was even more ill-advised than its predecessor of Versailles. For Turkey was not beaten. In Constantinople, certainly, the old Sultan—anxious to keep his throne at any price—was willing to accept whatever terms the Allies offered. But in Asia Minor, Mustapha Kemal, the spectacular, the incredible defender—with the German von Sanders—of Gallipoli, had formed a national Government. True he had nothing with which to arm the soldiers he conjured out of bare rock and sand, and he was already fighting his own sovereign in the Sublime Porte. But that didn't matter. Kemal as a soldier, had no equal, and with him—when the terms of the Sèvres Treaty were published—he had every peasant on the ‘bridge of Asia.’ For five hundred years the

Turks had been a ruling race. In earlier centuries their ancestors had ridden westwards raiding as they chose, conquering whenever they had a mind to settle. There is a saying in the East: 'The Turks don't even know when they're dead. To stop them you have to bury them!' Kemal applied this same phrase to the Australians when describing their magnificent work at Gallipoli.

Nothing would have stopped the Turks when they heard that Venizelos, backed by Basil Zaharoff, had received from an English politician the gift of whatever his armies, armed by the Allies, could take in Asia Minor. What was left of the Caliph's army fell to them at once. Then came the Greek invasion. Ismet Pasha, afterwards Prime Minister, who verbally defeated Lord Curzon at Lausanne and is now President of Turkey, joined Kemal. But they had no material. No military historian will ever be able to understand how these two men, a ruthless genius and a creative politician, both of them undefeatable soldiers, contrived to make a first-class army out of tired, wounded, or half-starved men without sufficient clothes to cover them, out of returned prisoners, with old-fashioned guns and scrapped rifles, using farm-carts for transport, and village women to carry the inadequate ammunition.

From a small square house built of rough stones on a hill-side Kemal organized the defence which halted a fresh Greek Army several hundred thousand strong on the banks of the Sakkarria River. It was there—at Chan Kaya—in the early summer of 1921, that I first met him. I had been in Palestine and Syria. The French were uncertain of their hold on the frontier which Georges Picot, the incautious little Consul, whose office-safe contained enough written dynamite to blow up all his supporters in Asia Minor, had negotiated with the help of that imaginative firebrand Mark Sykes and the adventurous de Bouillon, a soldier of fortune in the political sense of the word, who made history with his tongue.

So officially I was forbidden to cross into Anatolia, but the French have a sensible way of looking at these matters. "Madame," said a Colonel anxious for information, "Il parait que vous êtes du dernier bien," a phrase which I find untranslatable except by the slang, 'You are as thick as thieves' with all these rogues and gun-runners in the mountains. "I will lend you a horse, two horses if you prefer, and France will be grateful for your news." I accepted the stallion and a pack-pony, but committed myself to nothing. Riding one and dragging the other after me, accompanied by a Kurd in terrific ballooning trousers with a turban like an outsize in pumpkins, I crossed into Anatolia and eventually—because nobody knew what to do with me—I arrived on Kemal's doorstep. He was sitting on a packing-case cutting a splinter out of his bare foot. It was most unromantic. I felt this already legendary man ought, at least, to have been cleaning a rifle!

The first thing the future Ataturk said to me was: "I suppose you are a missionary! Nobody else could be so cursed interfering." Highly complimented, for I admire the missionary brand of interference, I retorted that I was just a traveller. "Oh," said Kemal, and I cannot remember that he said anything else. But somehow it was arranged that I should lodge in the village schoolhouse, and I arranged myself—with the immutable determination of youth—to spend most of my time under the hero's roof. For Kemal was my hero. King Feisal I loved as the greatest and most loyal of my friends, but his inclination to compromise disturbed me. Kemal—in 1921—seemed to me ideal and I liked his extraordinary household.

There was a cousin called Fikriye Hanum who adored him. She was a good-looking, soft, curved Oriental, who only wanted to serve. She looked after everybody and hung a large quantity of unsuitable objects on the walls—carpets,

swords, silks, enamels, and long-beaked brass coffee-pots. I remember even in my first passion for the East and all that belong to it, thinking the effect was overdone. Kemal's study looked not unlike a bazaar in Damascus. Fikriye behaved like a slave in an Arabian Night's tale and as such, alas, was abandoned. I believe she committed suicide. There were other intimates, including that extraordinary and brilliant woman, Halideh Hanum, later the wife of Dr. Adnan the Republic's first Minister of Health. She had been the leader of feminism in veiled Constantinople. Escaping death by drowning—in a weighted sack—as planned by the Sultan, and arrest by the Allies who knew she was a revolutionary, she swam out into the Bosphorus, was picked up by a fishing-boat and landed on the deserted Asian coast. Subsequently she played Joan of Arc to Kemal's greatly improved Dauphin. Legend has it that she tore off her veil at the head of a triumphant Turkish battalion marching on Smyrna. She tied it to her bayonet and, still attached to the weapon, brought it back to Kemal—while a rabble of defeated Greeks fled from the burning city—to demand his promise of emancipation for her countrywomen. Halideh just escaped with her life—and her husband—when, as Minister of Education, under the new Republic, she disagreed with the Dictator's latest executions. All the friends who were then with Kemal are dead. All would have given their lives ungrudgingly for their leader. I do not know what they felt when they were forced so to give them, but on the scaffold.

There was Colonel Arif, Kemal's foster-brother and companion in arms, who had fought the Great War at his side, saved his life in battle and deserted to join his idol in Anatolia. When they leaned together over a map, these two men—strong and hard, patriots before all else—looked as if they were blood brothers. On the 'day of judgment' in 1927, Arif was condemned to death with other moderates

who had joined a more or less constitutional opposition. In the same small, roughly built house at Chan Kaya where I had seen them gambling, drinking araki, sitting up half the night planning the rout of the Greeks, Kemal with one of his endless cigarettes in his mouth, laid down a bridge hand to sign the warrant. I believe he still loved Colonel Arif, but even his best friend *could* not stand in the way of his plans for Turkey.

The captain of the Lazz bodyguard who slept at Kemal's door was Osman Agha. In his national dress, black, with high boots and a swinging Cossack coat belted with pistols, a curved sword much in evidence, I thought him a magnificent personage—wild as any brigand in his own mountains—hawk-eyed and leather-skinned. He treated Kemal as a child or a precious parcel. He had shot several hundred Christians the previous year, and he was an accomplished strangler. Bodies did not embarrass him. He enjoyed both producing them and disposing of them. But he worshipped Kemal in whose service he was five times wounded before the Lazz guard—faithful till death—was broken up and Osman killed.

One scene I remember, not at Chan Kaya, but in the Agricultural College at Angora. For some time the Greek Army had been held up on the Sakkaria River, but they could not be dislodged. Untried like the Turks by a six-year war, some of it civil; with unlimited arms and ammunition, they held their bank of the river and were preparing to cross. Kemal ordered his troops to relax. He told them to play football, or to pretend to play. He announced a ball at Angora. It was the first to be held in the new, unfinished—indeed scarcely yet planned—and already threatened capital. It is nineteen years ago and Turkey is now a Great Power, key to the East, a bulwark against dictatorial aggression, loyal to her word as she has always been, and our most welcome ally. But I still remember the prelude to her first 'impossible' victory. The walls were rough plaster with damp staining

the whitewash. Lamps flared and candles were stuck into the necks of bottles. They guttered on the window-ledges. The band had been ordered to play European dances. It experimented in a series of discords. Under a great flag, riddled with holes, the men stood together, stiffly. They feared what they might be made to do—in a ballroom, not on a battlefield. The women were far more embarrassed. Some of them were on the verge of tears. Bereft of the veil which to middle-aged Turkish women still meant boredom perhaps, but security, charm, and privacy—all that they asked of life except a home and sufficient housekeeping money—they huddled together in a corner with their backs to the room. They wore as much clothing as possible. No scrap of skin showed if they could help it. Halideh, in a muslin dress high to the neck, looked ardent and intelligent. She has the face of an angel with a flaming sword.

How Mustapha Kemal, in uniform, with mud on his spurs, galvanized that ball into what his critics would call an 'orgy,' I have never been able to decide. He terrorized the band into playing the right notes. He pushed unwilling women into the arms of startled men and roared out at them: "Dance!" He would not let anyone stop. He poured out drink—there was lots to drink. The Turks have hard heads. Their only form of excess is courage in battle, but Kemal dispensed araki and champagne—pinkish and strange tasting—as if they were hot and cold water poured into a bath. By midnight the ball was a success. At its height, the host seized Halideh by one thin wrist—she was his Egeria, his luck, he wouldn't fight a battle without her—and thrust her hatless and coatless into a waiting car. Away they went, headlong through the night to the Sakkaria River. The unsuspecting Greeks were bored, careless, and—possibly—amused by the clumsy efforts of the Turkish footballers, for by this time the front lines, Moslem and Christian, were intimately acquainted. But with

the dawn their feelings changed. For before the sun rose Kemal, genius of attack, had launched a carefully planned offensive along the whole length of the line. How he armed it, nobody knows, but it was successful. The Greeks broke. They never stopped in that terrible forced retreat harassed on every side by the best sharp-shooters in the world, until they tumbled into their boats at Smyrna—under the guns of the Allied battleships, which could not fire because 'Europe would not stand another war.'

The Treaty of Sevres disappeared into a waste-paper basket. Kemal established his Turkish Republic. Within its frontiers he would have only Turks. "A village of my own people," he said to me, "within our natural borders is worth more than a foreign province somewhere in Arabia." He had no land greed. He believed in his countrymen, and intended to give them peace and safety. But he had to peel away the habits and traditions of centuries. The soldier, established as President of a young bewildered and, after the first victorious enthusiasm, sometimes resentful Republic, had to become a schoolmaster. Kemal hated his job while he carried it to a successful conclusion. He said to me: "I ought to have gone on being a soldier. I was happy then. I always knew what to do—even at Gallipoli that first day¹ when, taken by surprise, my pickets were forced to retire by Australians already two-thirds up towards the crests of Chanuk Bair. I had no idea anything was happening. I was in the middle of some ordinary manœuvres with one regiment—luckily it was our best, the 57th. We were going home to an early breakfast when the pickets caught up with us. We'd expected attack at Bulair where my chief, the German von Sanders was in command. I didn't even know if we had ball or blank ammunition, but I was prepared to fight with either! I had only a small scale map with half the positions unmarked. It was no use to me.

¹ April 25, 1915.

The only thing to do was to see what was on the other side of the ridge. I ran. How I ran ! Two hundred men scrambled after me, but they couldn't keep up. When I looked over the top, there were the Australians—barely four hundred yards away ! And behind me there was a lot of panting and grunting, but only twenty-seven rifles. If your people hadn't thought they were facing the whole Turkish Army, they could have taken the crest from a handful of winded men who hadn't enough breath to shoot straight ! Chanuk Bair held the road to Constantinople. Beyond it Greece, Roumania, and Bulgaria were undecided. Had you advanced just four hundred more yards that day—against nothing at all—the way to Russia would have been open. Food and arms could have gone in to her. There might have been no revolution." But Kemal was a match for any army. With his own hands he dragged the first gun into position. He called up the reserves guarding the supposedly vital points. He put every man into the front line. " We hadn't one soldier left. We hadn't a boy or a sporting rifle in reserve ! It was all there on the top of the ridge, and every man was worn out. We hadn't eaten since the previous night. We hadn't a tenth of the ammunition we needed. You thought you were up against our first defence. But there was no other." Kemal grey-faced, grim, harder than any other man of our generation, held his exhausted Turks on the ridge, but he could not dislodge the Australians. " If they'd been given their way, we'd have lost Chanuk Bair. If there'd been half a dozen more of them we couldn't have got a spade into the earth. As it was we dug all night and shot when it was absolutely necessary the next day."

Kemal was always happy when he remembered a battle. No man was a better soldier. As such, the whole of his country believed in him and agreed with him, but they did not like his reforms. " I told you I had to be a schoolmaster," he said, " with chalk and blackboard, and figuring simple

arithmetic instead of the arms I loved. I had to make a brave, hard-working but backward people into a nation capable of dealing with Europe. Under Sultan after Sultan we had been exploited. We were too lazy to do sums. We thought trade undignified. All our commerce and our finance was in the hands of foreigners. The Greeks and Armenians cheated us worst, but no European country was above sharing in the plucking." The new President quoted boots with soles of brown paper supplied by Western firms to the Turkish Army, and a railway built in a succession of unnecessary curves to prolong a contract conceived at so much a kilometre. We were fools and dupes, but that is ended. We are going to employ the best Europeans at our own price—a fair price—not to run us as they choose, but to advise. And when you come back, you will find we can not only defend ourselves and rule ourselves, but we can make our own clothes and forge our own weapons."

Kemal knew that the Anatolian peasants were about the hardest working and hardest living farmers in the world. "They don't need anything," he said, "neither comfort, nor warmth, nor what you would call food. They'll force any ground to grow a crop and if you give them a rifle, they'll fight till there isn't anything left."

"But they do need one thing," I said. The conversation was taking place in the study and office combined of the President's new house, which his devoted adherents insisted on calling 'the Palace,' on an arid hill-side in Angora, one spring at the beginning of his industrial reforms. The earth was burned brown by the persistent winds. Almond blossom, vividly pink, broke out of the sand. A camel caravan passed, at an unvarying two miles an hour, in front of the immense new wireless station, whose pylons had been erected on a hill known to Belisarius and every invading horde from Asia. "What do they need?" asked Kemal, seated on a carpet-

covered bench, with a prayer rug hung on the wall behind him.

“Their religion.”

The President, worthy successor to Omar, fighting Caliph of Islam, but prophet of industrialization under technical experts rather than of world conquest under Allah, retorted : “Let him keep his religion, but not the out-of-date social tradition which will not admit change or progress.” He moved impatiently and signalled for more coffee. “The Koran was a code of law, a dictionary of behaviour, an agricultural handbook, a complete system of citizenship and life. It was written for primitive desert dwellers, herdsmen, and small craftsmen twelve hundred years ago. It was written when women were the loot of war, helpless before the lusts of invaders. Would you live according to the precepts of your royal Richard who defeated Saladin ? Let the ignorant keep their faith in another world, but I must have a free hand to make the best—for every Turk—of this one which is much more certain.”

We spoke of the Caliphate—comparable to the Papacy—which gave to Ottoman Turkey more than the religious suzerainty of Islam. For, at the Sultan-Caliph’s command, a Jehad (the holy war) would have brought every Moslem sword out of its scabbard from Morocco to India. “It was a great weapon,” I said.

“An old-fashioned one,” retorted Kemal, “and an unfair one, for why should a merchant in East Africa or a farmer in the Punjab feel called upon to fight at the command of a grey-beard in Constantinople ?”

Before my next visit Kemal had thrust every available Turkish girl into a university, where she imagined education as an end to her troubles instead of as a means to diverse ends, or into an office where she longed for a young man to marry her, and occasionally for the ‘veil’ to accentuate her magnifi-

cent eyes and hide her thick ankles ! He had sent my great friend Rauf Bey as delegate to Ibn Saoud's Moslem Conference in Mecca in a bowler hat and a stiff collar. " I nearly choked," said the enchanting man. " The heat was intolerable in such unsuitable clothes. My coat was too tight and so were my new boots. I nearly got sunstroke, and couldn't sit on the floor ! " Rauf Bey has a sense of humour. He used to out-walk me altogether on the hills of Angora, and he gave excellent araki parties at which we all smoked water-pipes. Mine gurgled, and I expended a lot of muscular strength before I made it work !

After the war between Turks and Kurds on Mount Ararat, in 1929, I found a new Kemal in Angora. An angry man who insisted " I am Turkey. To attack me is to attack Turkey." His dictatorship had become unpopular among those who wanted an easier and what they supposed would be a more reasonable life. The Committee of Union and Progress which had struggled secretly against the last Sultan, renewed its activities in Angora. Ismet Pasha who was never an extremist and never afraid to express disapproval of ' gangster methods ' had been—temporarily—dismissed. Many of the moderate Ministers, even those like Rauf and Refet, who had done much to establish the new Republic, had fled with Halideh Hanum. Then the Kurdish tribes, led by the superb Sheikh Said, hereditary chief of the Naksibendi dervishes, raised the green banners of Islam east of Lake Van on the Persian frontier. He fought for the faith of Allah and for a system which was already dead. Kemal left the beautiful and argumentative Latifa, his wife at the time, left his politics, the araki of which he could drink any amount without being affected, left his modernist farm, his new alphabet, and his educational plans, all of which worried the staid elders who had been forced to move from somnolent and luxurious Constantinople to the savage hills of Angora. Once again a soldier—and therefore

irresistible—he forced the pace eastwards to fight for his new nation which to him was a religion. In two months he smashed the rebellion. Kurdestan was treated with a ferocity equal to that of a Red army obliterating the Kulaks. Forty-six chiefs were hanged, among them Sheikh Said. But this great man cannot have minded death. For him it was no more than a moment of discomfort. He told the President of the Tribunal, who greatly enjoyed hangings : “ I do not hate you. You and your master are accursed. We shall settle accounts before Allah on a Day of honest Judgment.”

The Kurd died for his country and, when next I visited Mount Ararat, his name was the banner for which his tribesmen fought. It was the comfort of women in childbirth, and the the glory to which small boys in yards and yards of trousering and voluminous melon-turbans strove to attain.

In the same series of trials reaching from Azerbaijan to Angora, Javid the Jew and Freemason, Minister of Finance under the Sultan, friend of the great Moslem visionary, Enver Pasha—who wanted to implement Alexander’s dream of a marriage between Asia and Europe, but in the bonds of Islam —was condemned to the gallows. In vain Sarraut, the French Freemason, appealed for him. So did the Rothschilds and the leading newspapers of Europe. But Kemal was inflexible. He gave another ball, this time at Chan Kaya. It was very different from the first. There were electric lights and Ambassadors with stars and orders covering dismayed hearts. The women were dressed as Paris decreed. Araki, beer, the same sweet champagne flowed for the benefit of guests who certainly did not want to think. There was negro music. It grew wilder as Kemal shouted : “ Be gay, curse you, be gay ! You’re alive, aren’t you ? We’re all alive. So we must be gay ! ”

I remember Soubhi Bey saying : “ He is right—all civilized peoples dance.”

A few miles away in Angora, in the heat of a summer night men mounted the scaffolds, one after another. Each watched his friends die. They were imperturbable. Javid the little Jew who loved an intricate intellectual problem, who could figure like a machine, who was amused by women and by old French prints, who had enjoyed power and used it—according to his ideas—with unswerving loyalty to Turkey is said to have apologized to his executioners. “Forgive me, my brothers, if I am clumsy with the noose.” Adjusting it round his neck, he said: “It is a new kind of cravat, I am not accustomed to it.” With this jest he died, fearless as Sheikh Said, who knew it was not the end.

Next day Kemal had no expression at all. He had not gone to bed, but he did not look tired. After his usual long hours at the office he went back to Chan Kaya—driving very slowly through the town without a guard—and played poker till the middle of the next night. Nobody dared speak to him about the executions, but later I said to him: “This is the first time I have seen you frightened of your enemies.”

Kemal looked at me with a blank face. “Fool,” he said, and after a long pause. “When I hang good men it is because I am bound to make even that sacrifice for a united Turkey. There is nothing I will not do for the Republic. No life counts against the needs of Turkey.”

For sixteen years Kemal lived for that one purpose—to put the new Republic on terms of equality with Europe. For it he sacrificed every personal inclination, even his natural appreciation of German efficiency inherited from the days of his war service under von Sanders.

Since 1936, the new Turkey created by this greatest of contemporary soldiers and statesmen has been inclined to friendship with England, first because she needs peace in the Mediterranean, and secondly because she not only desires tranquillity but intends, if possible, to maintain it. While the

dictator countries reiterated feverishly that they would have so many guns or planes next year, that within a few months, such and such fortifications would be finished, the long-sighted Turk, conscious of the immense progress made in the fifteen years of his freedom from European dominion, said : “ You must come back again in ten years or twenty. Then our factories will be worth looking at ! Then we shall be producing on a big scale.”

Few other people in the last decade have had the courage to look so far ahead.

Two men have been responsible for the position of Turkey to-day, Kemal Ataturk and his successor, the present President, Ismet Ineunu, who takes his surname from the decisive battle which he won at Ineunu at the end of the long Greco-Turkish war. Ataturk has been famous during the grown-up life of my generation. But what is little known in England is the quality of the hold the Ghazi had on his heavily-taxed and severely disciplined people. He was harsh, domineering, and violent, but they knew exactly what he was doing. Unlike the other dictators, he took the whole country into his confidence. He never bluffed. He never said more than he meant. He never asked for a useless effort or sacrifice. He believed with Frederick the Great, that ‘ a village on the frontier is worth a hundred times more than a distant or a foreign principality.’ After his astounding military success he would have obtained—at Lausanne—a considerable expansion of his frontiers. But, I repeat, that he wanted Turks, and Turks alone within his borders. This was his consistent policy.

Here is the strength of our new ally. She is of one mind, one race, and one faith. The bulk of the people consist of Anatolian peasants who for centuries have excelled at soldiering. When told to work instead of fight, they lay down their rifles and use the tools of masons, farmers, or engineers with the same disciplined effectiveness. But war is in their blood.

In the new President whom I knew as Izmet Pasha, for thirteen years a careful Prime Minister yet never afraid to argue with or criticize the Ghazi, the Turks have found a reliable Leader. He might have been recognized long ago, for the greatness of resolution which is his, but Ataturk was, of necessity, more spectacular. The Prime Minister had to bear the obloquy of unpopular reforms instituted, or of ruthless decisions reached by his erstwhile colleague in arms and politics. It is said that the two men, destined to re-create and then to rule Turkey, first met in the Great War. Ineunu is the elder of the two. He is deaf and careful with words. He was never Kemal's greatest friend, because he did not hesitate to oppose the Ghazi when he disagreed with him. As Chief of Staff, he shared in the victories which freed his country, and as Prime Minister he consolidated them. In earlier years he had served in the Yemen, in Western Arabia, and had travelled sufficiently to have personal knowledge of European 'power-politics.' By character, I should have thought he must inevitably be inclined to Germany, for he admires efficiency, success, swift tactics, and the grasp of an opponent's limitations which makes it possible to seize and hold an advantage. But because he thinks straight as a means to making the best use of that excellent weapon—speech, he must equally be contemptuous of Italy's claim to a 'historic mission' among peoples predominantly Moslem.

For the Fascists, conquerors of the holy valley of Kufra in the Libyan Desert, who turned whole families of the Senussi out into the desert, foodless and waterless to die with their women and children on a hopeless flight to Egypt can expect no sympathy from even their most modern Moslem neighbours.

The scales were weighted in favour of the democracies by Turkey's need of peace. She possesses nearly all the necessary raw materials. She has metals and a soil which will produce

the essential fibres and foods. Mosul, Roumania, and Southern Russia with their unlimited oil, are easily accessible to her. But her industry, banking, and commerce, held in pre-War days in the greedy hands of Armenians, Greeks, or Western Europeans, have still to be developed. The new Turkey is determined to be free for ever of foreign control, but she has spent large sums wisely on obtaining the best foreign advice. The American firm of Wallace Clark has been retained as business experts. Jews from Germany have used brilliant brains on behalf of Angora's music, dramatic art, and surgery. Their teaching is subsidized by the State, but each pupil has to give two years' service to the nation in return for every year of education. The great British engineering firm of Sir Alexander Gibb has been employed for some years as consultants for all public works, and another English company, Messrs. Brassett were entrusted with a three-million contract for reorganizing the Turkish iron and steel industry.

A low tender from Messrs. Krupp failed to secure the contract for re-fortifying the Black Sea straits and negotiations for the necessary armaments proceeded with Great Britain.

Thus Angora, for all her interest in and loyalty to Russia (first of her post-War friends), has swung back towards Great Britain, her old ally of the Crimean War, her natural partner in the Middle East. For at all costs, says Izmet Ineunu, there must be years and years of peace in the Eastern Mediterranean. There must be time for Turkey to complete the commercial and the educational modernization she has so well begun. For this reason Izmet Ineunu, brilliant horseman, bridge-player, ironical in speech, with an encyclopædic mind, 'foot-loose' as any American tourist, who knows every inch of his country and never 'Stays put' in the capital if there is anything to be seen on the farthest frontier, has thrown the whole weight of the new stable Turkey, greatest Power in the Middle East, on the side of democracy and the maintainance of existing

conditions in the Mediterranean. It is an immense contribution which he has made, for Turkey controls the trade and traffic, the arsenal and the refuge of the Black Sea. Since 1933 she has dominated the Balkan Pact, which includes Greece. Since 1937 she has been the moving spirit of that strong, Four-Power Middle-Eastern alliance, including Persia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. As such, she inevitably influences India's eighty million Moslems and Mohammedan opinion in North Africa.

Since 1936 Turkey, by legitimate agreement, has been re-fortifying the straits leading to the Black Sea. New fortresses have been built to command the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Under the Montreux Convention, President Ineunu elegant, short, slim, a diplomatist as well as a soldier, but capable of courageous and far-reaching decisions, can close the straits as he chooses. For he has the right to forbid the passage of battleships whenever his country 'considers herself to be threatened with imminent danger of war.'

Turkish friendship is essential, therefore, to any country bordering on the Black Sea. Turkish guns, and behind them some of the best soldiers in the world, command the narrow passage through which must pass the whole of Roumanian oil and Southern Russian wheat in time of war. The Turkish Army is well-armed and magnificently reliable.

In all history there has never been a moment when control of the Black Sea, when solidarity of interest between Turkey, the Arabs, and Egypt, and friendship with these three Moslem forces has been more essential to the Western democracies. From the Russian shore of the Black Sea to Egypt's deserted frontier facing Fascist planes and guns, stretches our 'Maginot Line.'

Only Moslem friendship can defend our Eastern commitments, Turkey—and, in some measure also, Palestine, the land sacred to Islam as well as to Jewry—are the keys to the East. President Ineunu, following without a break the patient,

constructive, self-controlled policy of his great predecessor, has put one of them into our hands. France has added to the security of that Middle Eastern defence line by agreeing to the secession of the Sanjak, a primarily Turkish province included in the mandate of Syria.

If, following the example of Britain in Baghdad, she ever cedes authority in Damascus to enthusiastic Arab patriots who put a nebulous freedom before unity, strength or even good government as the West knows it, she will, by the sensible and generous cession to Turkey of a province in which the Arabs can claim no predominating interests, prevent such a tragedy as the massacre of the Assyrian minority which followed the British departure from Iraq.

Turkey will have control of all her Turks. She will have no reason for anything but the best of understandings with her neighbours, including Greece, already attached to her by common interests. The only irritant in the Eastern Mediterranean, so far as she is concerned, is the presence of Italian guns and aeroplanes on twelve of the Dodecanese Islands, almost within sight of her shores.

These are as the gunmen and racketeers of America's underworld to a millionaire disturbed about the security of his infant heir. For independence is still the adored child of a Turkish President. Izmet Ineunu can strike as hard in its defence as Ataturk. Quiet instead of domineering, cool instead of vigorously temperamental, no less strong because he is neither violent nor erratic, he presents an arresting contrast to the greatest of all Turks, perhaps the greatest man of our generation, Kemal, the soldier born, the reformer and schoolmaster by sense of duty.

But the two men, who argued so much, never disagreed about Turkey's place in the modern world. Both would make any sacrifice of personal inclination, of cultural or military affinity, to maintain her in the vanguard of progress and peace.

ELEVEN



*THE SOLDIER
WHO MADE HIMSELF SHAH*

THE SOLDIER WHO MADE HIMSELF SHAH

AT A DINNER PARTY IN TEHRAN I SAT BETWEEN PRINCE Teymourtache, then Court Minister—he was subsequently imprisoned and, I believe, died in gaol, as is sometimes the fate of Eastern favourites—and the then Resident Director of the powerful Anglo-Iranian Oil Co.

Knowing these two men had as much influence with the Shah as anyone in Persia, I confided to them my ambition.

“I know Kemal well and I’ve met Ibn Saoud” (the Lord of desert Arabia). “Do persuade the Shah to see me—I must meet the third great leader of Islam. I want to talk to him about Palestine and Communism and all sorts of other things.”

Prince Teymourtache, adviser at the side of the Peacock Throne, was doubtful.

“His Majesty would never receive a woman alone. . . . He gives few private audiences. . . .”

But the undefeatable Tommy Jacks to whom everyone went for help as a matter of course, said: “It might be arranged.” It was.

In an imposing car of many cylinders, so different from the overloaded lorries with pilgrims scattered on top of the ‘dry goods’ bales on which I had travelled three or four thousand miles round Persia—I drove out to the Summer Palace.

“You are lucky!” said Virginia Jacks, beautiful and efficient. “I do believe you’re the only woman who’s ever had a private audience. . . .”

Impressed, hot, and doubtful of my linguistic powers, I

remember nothing of all the rooms there must have been on the way to His Majesty's study, except an immense *salon* panelled in glass with huge ornate chandeliers hanging from the roof.

Sitting on a hard chair, in front of a desk exquisitely inlaid with mother-of-pearl and coloured woods in a room representing a lifetime's work, for the panels were wrought like a spider's web with the same delicate materials, His Majesty seemed to me very imposing.

A still and powerful figure, his hands rarely moved. He held himself as stiffly as a Prussian Guardsman. His broad shoulders and the set of his body suggested an immense reserve of force.

Here was a man who ruled for one concentrated purpose which he imposed by strength of will on a nation consisting of innumerable different races and religions.

"The Persian character has got to be hardened," said the Shah. "For too long my countrymen have relied on others. I want to teach them their own value so that they may be independent in mind and action."

"Do you think it's a good thing to educate your best men in Europe?" I asked doubtfully.

"It would be much better to educate them in the country where they're going to live and work, but we haven't enough teachers yet," retorted the Shah.

"I hope the young men we sent to Italy or France will realize that civilization is different in every country."

"I don't want to turn Persians into a bad copy of Europeans. Each nation has a mould of its own which should be developed and improved till it produces the perfect citizen."

At this point I congratulated the Shah on his tremendous achievements, for as a Persian Cossack, fighting on the losing side in the Great War, without money or influence, by sheer force of personality, he dragged his country out of defeat and

despair, he seized and stabilized the ancient Peacock Throne to which he had no right but that of merit, and in less than a generation he had enforced a modernization which would normally take more than a century.

"I am always dissatisfied," said the Shah. "There is so much to be done and I can't do it quickly enough."

I asked whether His Majesty thought that with trade opening the frontier between his country and Russia, there was any possibility of Bolshevism spreading among his people.

"None at all," retorted the Shah. "To begin with, sufficient Persians travel to Baku and Erivan to be able to compare the conditions of Russia with the conditions existing in their own country. They are too wise to wish to change."

"Then you must remember the Persian is not naturally destructive or even experimental. He is not at all in sympathy with the basic ideas of Communism."

"Like you English, who regard your homes, however small, as your castles—isn't that right?—my countryman likes his own simple possessions, his own life hidden away behind the walls of his garden, and his own way of thinking."

"The villager here doesn't want very much nor does the shepherd, but he wants that little for himself and his own family."

"Some years ago I should have said the same of China," I suggested.

His Majesty protested.

"The cases are not at all similar," he said. "China, afraid of foreign dominion, might turn to Bolshevism as her last available weapon, but there is no such danger in Persia."

The Shah's words came quickly and he spoke with eager sincerity.

"But," I argued with him, "Persia may have no choice. Your northern frontiers are completely unguarded. At this moment hundreds of Russian refugees are swimming the Aras

river or floating across on blown-up goatskins to escape General Baghirov's guns. What those wretched Kulaks can do to escape persecution, the Red Army would certainly not hesitate to accomplish if they want more oil or the agricultural resources of Mazanderan."

"There is sufficient oil at Baku," insisted the Shah, "and the Caspian protects Mazanderan. Soon I shall be able to put a hundred thousand men in the field. Besides, Britain would have to fight to defend the oil wells—they are a long way from the Soviet frontier. The Red Army would not find it easy to get so far. They have no transport or organization." He paused to think.

"I see that Persia or Afghanistan might be the Russian road to India. If she wants to attack you, she will have to sacrifice our neutrality. But the formation of the country is against her. The Hindu Kush in Afghanistan has held up countless armies. Even Alexander had to go round it. And you know what our deserts are like. Can you imagine the difficulties of invading India across the 'Sea of Salt' or the 'Sea of Sand'?"

"I don't think there is as much danger of such invasion—although Nadir Khan marched to India across the worst of all your deserts—as of a sudden raid on your oil-fields," I said.

"The Russians would be operating a long way from their base. They would have great difficulty with supplies," returned the Shah. "We should cut them off in the north. They might not be able to get back again across the Aras River. Presumably you would defend your own interests from the Persian Gulf. The oil-fields would be within range of your ships and 'planes."

"I did not know that your Majesty believed in defensive co-operation between your country and mine inside the Gulf."

"To-day we are at peace," said the Shah firmly, "and therefore I am interested in what belongs to Persia, in what

she needs and must be able to keep. When you talk to me of war it is a different matter. If we were invaded I should accept any suitable alliance against the invaders, but I will have no vestige of foreign interference in the concerns of my own country. I have told you that no Persian could have any sympathy with Bolshevism. It would be against his nature. I am indeed convinced that the two great evils from which a country can suffer are foreign control and Communism. But had Persia to choose between the two, I should be the first to put myself at the head of a Communist army."

It occurred to me that there might be no choice in the years to come and I suggested to the Shah: "What if the threat of foreign control comes as a result of Communist ambition or, as I said, of the Soviet's need for more oil?"

"Then," said the solid, heavy man, speaking German with the expressiveness of his own more flowery language, "I would accept any help because I am for my own country before all others."

Later we talked of what His Majesty called 'industrial control'—the yoke of Manchester and Huddersfield. For India, Persia, and Afghanistan (before the era of Japanese competition and the recent growth of native mills and factories) used to buy all their cottons and woollens from our looms.

"I am trying to develop our own industries in every possible way," said the Shah. "I won't bore you with a list of all the innovations I have in mind, but they include plant to deal with every stage of cotton from the moment it leaves our fields till it is made into the shirts we are all going to wear."

His Majesty pointed to Prince Teymourtache's admirable khaki.

"His suit and mine both came from Isfahan and if you return next year," the Shah permitted himself one of his rare smiles, "you may quite well find me at the head of the largest factory in the country, for I'm determined to increase our

production until it is capable of supplying the needs of the whole nation."

The Shah's desk was littered with papers, with samples of seeds and agricultural products, and with patterns of the purplish local suiting under an onyx paper-weight.

If it hadn't been for his well-cut uniform, the maker of modern Persia might have been a very much occupied business man.

But like his idol, Ataturk, first President of Turkey, the Shah is primarily a soldier.

Having no use for political intrigue or for any form of subterfuge, he gives definite far-reaching orders and expects them to be carried out at once.

Yet when he talked to me—in excellent German—his words came slowly as if he weighed them and sometimes, I thought, he had difficulty in finding the right ones in which to express his unyielding ideas. He seemed to me to have no opinions, only hard and fast convictions.

A tall man of heavy and imposing carriage, he gives an impression of prodigious calm. That he is fundamentally and beyond all else a patriot nobody could doubt.

He is insular perhaps because he fears the influence of Europe on the soft material out of which he intends to re-shape the great and glorious Persia of earlier years—when Cyrus ruled 'the known world.'

After the Shah had explained that "Persia must learn to do without foreigners" and that "in five or six years it will be unnecessary to employ any but Persian officials," I asked His Majesty if he admired any particular Europeans.

"Mussolini and Hitler have both done good work for their countries," said the arbiter of Central Asia. "As a strong nationalist I admire their patriotism and specially do I appreciate the Führer's enterprise, organization, and efficiency. He is a great genius. But I think Kemal Ataturk is the greatest

man of our time. He built securely, and his work will endure long after his death."

The Shah described Turkey as "Imperial Britain's Maginot Line."

"For," said this blunt and sensible soldier-politician, "England cannot afford to allow German influence east of the Balkans."

"Never again," he added, "can you let Turkey come in on the other side."

Fervently I agreed. "The Turks are about the best soldiers in the world," I said.

"Remember that and tell your politicians to remember it when next they haggle over a loan. You cannot bring the irritations of economic shopkeeping into the most vital of your foreign relationships. If you could cease to think in terms of petty, commercial arithmetic, your soldiers would not have to fight against such unnecessary odds."

The Shah actually sighed. "I admire your soldiers," he said, "but your Ministries do their best to lose all wars before your Army has a chance to win them. There is nothing you could not do if one bomb—large enough to obliterate Downing Street—could be dropped in just the right place!"

Years later, President Roosevelt said the same thing to me. He added that if our F.O. could be closed for ten years we should never have to fight another war.

The Shah is a strong, although in many ways a modern, Moslem.

He is proud of the great church which conquered and converted from the Atlantic to China, but believes that she must establish herself as a leader of progress rather than cling to her old-fashioned theory 'All change is sin.'

He regards Britain as the *guardian* as well as the ruler of the largest Islamic empire in the world.

“ You will lose pride of place to France, who has done well by the Arabs of North Africa,” he said, “ if you cannot achieve a satisfactory policy in Palestine. You will alienate eighty million Moslems in India—no longer will you have the great princely states such as Hyderabad and Bhopal urging Moslem co-operation as in the Great War. Afghanistan, Persia, and Turkey must inevitably draw together on behalf of their co-religionists. You are risking the enmity of half the African and Asian world to benefit nobody, for the Jews are as the sea-sands. You cannot compress the shores of the universe on to one small Palestinian beach.”

The Shah spoke so gravely that his metaphors sounded more ominous than picturesque.

I told His Majesty the tale of the tattered Hebrew taxi-driver in Haifa, earning hardly enough to live although he came of good industrial stock in Central Europe. Yet when I asked him if he was happy he answered : “ How could I not be ? It is Eretz Israel ” (the land of Israel).

The Shah did not smile.

He said thoughtfully : “ Some Jews have emigrated from Persia. There are others, deeply religious, who would like to do the same, but they are too poor to make the long journey. But the rich Jewish merchants will not leave Tehran or Meshed where they can make fortunes as middlemen.”

Later I talked to the Shah about the fugitive King Amanullah’s effort to unveil, at a moment’s notice, the women of Afghanistan.

“ Women advance less quickly than men,” said the Shah, and he spoke with more diffidence than he had yet displayed of his desire to widen the life of Persian girls and women.

Already some of the Ministers’ wives had discarded the veil and His Majesty hoped the younger generation would follow their example.

“ It is a matter of custom, not of religion,” he said. “ A

woman feels not only safe but free when she walks in the town, invisible under her veil. Nobody knows who she is. Nobody can interfere with her."

He paused to think.

"For so long women have had a life of their own. It is they who hold back, not wishing to share their days with men."

I remembered a young woman in Isfahan who had said to me, "It would be intolerable if we had to think of the likes and dislikes of more than one man!"

After a silence the Shah continued: "A woman learns all there is to be known about one man. She has him as a child in her hands and she can do what she likes with him. She knows his fears and how to comfort him—"

A smile—the second in all that long talk—spread over his strong features as this man of over sixty thought of his own wife. She knows best how to prepare his opium pipe. To her he used to go when he was very tired. She said very little. She was not at all modern, but she was restful and very sure of herself. For nothing on earth would she *willingly* have left the Anderun. She could not understand my pleasure in travel, and the only moment she approved of me was when I told her the story of an Arab friend in Damascus. This wife of seventeen, already a mother, had said to me: "I see only one real difference between our lives and yours. We spend our time making one man happy and you devote yours to making several miserable."

That day I left the Shah on a marble porch at the summer Palace of S'ad Abad. It hung like the nest of an eagle over descending terraces. Tehran legend insists (erroneously) that I practised my indifferent Persian addressing him familiarly, "Wilt thou permit that I take thy photograph?" before he posed for my camera.

Behind him was a delicious room panelled and roofed with

encrusted mirrors, whose thousand facets reflected the sun. Below him Tehran, in the plain, was spread out like a historical carpet. In the distance Mount Demavend, the Fujiyama of Persia, raised a dazzling white cone above successive ranges.

His Majesty called me back to admire the view. Side by side we watched the flight of a military 'plane.

"The Army has been the first step," reflected His Majesty. "It has prepared the ground."

"And fenced it," I said.

The Shah actually laughed. "I am a soldier, not a diplomat," he retorted.

TWELVE



*KING FEISAL'S
THIRTEEN YEARS*

KING FEISAL'S THIRTEEN YEARS

IT WAS WITH FEISAL, A PRINCE OF MECCA AND SECOND SON OF King Hussein of the Hedjaz, that the idea of Arab independence originated. With Colonel Lawrence as a brilliant and original assistant, he fought on the side of the Allies. His irregular troops, Beduin from the great deserts, mounted on trotting camels or the small wiry Arab horses which are only used in battle, harassed the Turks on their eastern flank. Their daring was probably exaggerated as legends grew round the romantic figure of their leader, the young Sherif, descendant of the Prophet, who dreamed not of an empire, but of a united states of Arabia, its centre the holy city of all Islam. Feisal's levies entered Damascus ahead of the Allied troops. The streets were decorated for him. The flags hung from roofs and balconies. Acclaimed as a saviour, he rode through the street called Straight, believing with the people who crowded to his stirrups—content if they could touch his woollen robes—that according to the promises made by Lord Curzon and Sir Henry MacMahon, “while the sun rises and sets, the Arab flag shall fly over the cities of Damascus, Hama, Homs, and Aleppo.”

The British were anxious to keep faith. But France remembered the days of the romantic Queen Claude and ‘Partons pour la Syrie.’ She was embarrassed by the protests of the Lyons silk merchants whose raw material came from the Lebanon, and of the Church which could not stomach the transfer of heretic Christian sects, Maronites and Metouelis, as well as Roman and Greek Catholics to the rule of Islam.

Her problems were undoubtedly complicated, for there was no suggestion of unity in Syria. From their mountain stronghold, the Druses, under their great warrior Sultan el Atrash, were prepared to support Feisal. But the price they exacted would have been heavy, for they looked upon raiding as a right, and no one—not even the Turks—had yet penetrated the secrets of their citadel at Sueida. The Lebanon on the other hand craved for French support, if not actually for French rule. The rich merchants of the coastal cities, with their collections of carpets, jewels, and ancient enamelled water-pipes, looked upon Paris as their spiritual, cultural, and sartorial home. They had nothing in common with the Arabs of the interior, who proclaimed Feisal King on the day of his spectacular entry into Damascus.

It was in the spring of 1920 that I first met the man who for twenty years represented Arab progress. In the cafés of Damascus, limelit by the political ambitions of France, international spies pooled their information. Defying the Allies, Feisal maintained his throne. Syria was superficially independent, but there was a French battalion at Beyrouth. The young, hot-headed Nationalists longed to attack the solitary garrison. Their king refused permission.

The Emir Zeid, King Hussein's youngest son, had a house beyond the seven rivers, and the apricot groves which give Damascus an atmosphere shared by no other Eastern town. In his garden the young Prince had planted every English flower he knew and when Feisal joined us under the trees the first thing he said was : “Don’t talk to me in Arabic. I could not bear to waste the sound of an English voice. Now, tell me quickly about all my friends.” He asked about the men who had fought with him in the war. “None of them write to me now—but I can’t believe they have deserted me.” Isolation and the innumerable responsibilities of his position were evidently troubling the King.

Tacitly encouraged by France, weary of waiting for the culmination of a victory already won, fired by the enthusiasms of the country whose salvation he had plotted even in the far-away days when he served under the Turkish Governor, Jemal Pasha, he had been forced by a *coup d'état* into an untenable position, since he had no power to enforce his authority. His administration was crippled by lack of funds, his generosity appealed to by every case of distress consequent on Turkish maladministration. He poured his private fortune into the sieve of government and found that—since France refused the customs dues and taxation was disorganized—he had nothing with which to make roads, encourage agriculture and education, pay the police and the Army, and meet the hundred other calls upon a nation's exchequer. England withheld the promised subsidy on the ground of disturbances outside the Arab kingdom which she supposed to be engineered from within, while by her refusal to acknowledge the Emir's position, she undermined the prestige which was his only weapon to enforce law and order. Feisal's personality alone united the discordant elements in a town composed of every race and creed and, in spite of European pressure, he went far towards rousing a national spirit in a people so long in subjection to a retrogressive race that they had lost both ideals and enterprise.

Looking down the table strewn with marigold heads, I saw the same look of strain on every officer's face. Devoted to Feisal, they were prepared to work for him, but they found it far more difficult than fighting for him ! "I am an old boulevardier, Madame," said the amateur Minister for Foreign Affairs. "After half a lifetime in Paris, I am out of place here." Feisal was troubled about the division of Palestine and Syria. He said to me : "You will have years and years of trouble if you persist in your Zionist policy. Jerusalem can never be a capital city. No arterial railway reaches her. No old caravan

route went near her. She stands apart on her mountains, symbol of the altar and the Kibla,¹ but not of the parliament. The Caliphate moved between Mecca, Baghdad, and Damascus, but its seat was never at Jerusalem, although the Mosque of Omar which you think of as Solomon's temple, is the third holiest in Islam." An officer suggested : " It is the future which interests us, not the past. If the country is to be divided there can be no commerce or prosperity. Let France keep the province of Beyrouth if necessary, but let Haifa be the port of an Arab Syria, and Damascus its capital. Here we have unlimited water-power and timber. We can spread in these directions without climbing up and down hills and we've the grain of the Hauran to draw upon."

The Emir interpolated : " Damascus by her position has always been an ideal capital. The Baghdad railway, the Persian oil-line, the main caravan route to the East should all pass through her."

" Perhaps that is why France covets her ? "

" She cannot afford the extravagance, but she hopes that the end will repay the means."

When the meal came to an end the new ministers and the officers in khaki withdrew. The King moved his chair under a thorn-tree and began to roll cigarettes. A breeze blew straight from Mount Hermon. There was a scent of apricots, and I listened for the sound of the seven rivers while birds washed their metallic-blue wings in a fountain. Feisal was very good-looking in those days, before his hair went grey and his face became seamed with trouble and ill-health, but he would not smile. " Are you terribly tired of it all ? " I asked. " Do you want to go back to the deserts ? "

" Oh——" breathed the King, and leaned back stretching his arms above his head with a gesture of longing which answered my question. He said : " I am a Beduin by blood

¹ The prayer niche of Islam.

and I am stifled by walls of masonry and clouds of intrigue. Even my friends are beginning to distrust me for I counsel a patience which they stigmatize as weakness. If we fight, the European papers will insert a small paragraph at the bottom of a column concerning 'disturbances in Syria satisfactorily quelled by prompt action on the part of France,' but a people who might one day be a nation will be wiped out. On the other hand, if we accept a mandate whose elasticity will be stretched to cover military occupation, with French coinage and language, the partitioning of Syria and the establishment of a tyrannical bureaucracy, we shall be called cowards whose words were out of proportion to their deeds."

Every evening I used to dine with 'the Emir,' as he preferred to be called—"for I haven't yet learned how to be a king, and I doubt if France will allow me to complete that particular study!" After the many dishes heaped with rice and spiced meat had been carried away by black attendants—slave-born or captured as children in the mountains of Abyssinia—we used to sit for a long time on a balcony from which there was a view of the city wrapped in a quilt of apricot trees. Mount Hermon dominated the desert. We talked so much—generally about some aspect of the Arab problem—that Tachsin Kadri, now Chamberlain to the King of Iraq and K.C.M.G., whom I nicknamed the Perfect Aide-de-Camp, generally went to sleep on a bench, and a little crumpled figure in grey and gold silks would creep into the room and beg her 'King' to rest.

"This is my nurse," explained Feisal. "She was with my mother when I was born and so she thinks she has a right to interrupt my work. Sometimes she cries over me and pets me, and generally interferes with State business because she has a fixed idea that I ought to go to bed."

"Do you obey her?"

"Not often. It's such waste of time. Besides, I don't like

rooms. I can only sleep well when I see a three-cornered splash of light through the opening of a tent."

At the time the little old nurse was the only woman in the palace, for the Emir had sworn that he would not see his wife and only son again until Arab independence had been assured. This oath he kept and his family did not rejoin him till he became King of Iraq.

When I next saw the Emir he was an exile at Cernobbio on Lago Maggiore. The ill-fated Syrian kingdom had fallen. France had established herself in Damascus. Arab independence seemed to be a mirage, but Feisal was still convinced that he could turn it into reality. Already he was suffering from overwork and worry. He didn't like the lake. "Water has no expression," he said. "It is inhuman as an artillery barrage, whereas the desert, even if it is an enemy, fights you face to face."

At that time I was preparing for my journey across the Libyan Desert to Kufra, the secret oasis of the Senussi. Feisal gave me letters of introduction to the Emir of this ascetic North African sect, and for his sake Hassanein Bey and I were warmly welcomed by the ruling families in Cyrenaica and helped on our thousand-mile journey across the desert. The Emir Idris es Senussi said of Feisal: "He was born to help the Arabs—that is his destiny."

When I returned from my Libyan journey in 1921, Cairo was the centre of the negotiations which led to Feisal's acceptance of the throne of Iraq. The Emir used to come to my sitting-room in Shepheard's Hotel and talk about a "United States of Arabia," but he was reluctant to go to Iraq. Still thinking of himself as a bedouin, he feared the climate and the town life. But at last, persuaded by a number of his friends, he agreed to accept the new throne provided Colonel, now Sir Kinahan, Cornwallis could be released from the Egyptian service to go with him. A telegram to that effect

was sent to the Colonial Office. I remember Colonel Lawrence begged Feisal to write 'if Cornwallis or Lawrence can come with me,' but the Emir refused. He wanted only *one* man and that his best friend, who for the next ten years worked as adviser to the Ministry of the Interior in Baghdad.

The close friendship between these two men, both inspired by a vision of Arab unity, endured till the King died.

When with pride I introduced my husband to Feisal of Iraq, he said: "Of course he is charming, but if you had only married Cornwallis, you would have been as a sister in my house!"

All Arabs like to plan marriages. I remember a delightful old sheikh deciding that Gertrude Bell and Colonel Lawrence would make an ideal pair. Miss Bell was a great friend of Feisal's. They used to go out shooting together, and the King told me she had 'the mind and the aims of a man.' They appreciated each other's sincerity. Both were fearless and both were excellent riders.

When I stayed in Baghdad the King used to lend me his Arab stallions. They were as nervous as cats, frightened of their own shadows. One day, riding along an embankment almost as narrow as a wall and very high, I saw Feisal approaching from the opposite direction. There was no room to pass or to turn. Already my animal was half over the edge with excitement. The King checked his horse, brought it straight up on its hind-legs and by a feat which I've never seen equalled, swung it round so that it came down facing the opposite direction. "I haven't forgotten my bedouin training," he called over his shoulder.

Iraq took toll of the King's vitality. I saw him exhausted by the heat of comparatively early springs. Sitting on the terrace of his farm on the Tigris, he would talk of his English friends and of his desire to co-ordinate the ambitions of England and Iraq. He was an astute politician and not a

bad judge of men. Asked what he thought of European statesmen, he once replied: "They are rather like modern art—greatly improved by distance."

But his farm, where he sought refuge from politicians of all parties was furnished in modern style. Adjusting myself to the extreme squareness of the chairs, I asked the King why he liked them. He replied: "I have to live *ahead* of the times in order to induce my people to live up to them." For this reason he experimented with the most modern forms of agriculture and travelled whenever possible by air. "I want to go fast," he said, "but I realize the majority of my people are still used to the pace of a camel."

The King's chief difficulty was to hold the balance between the advanced young Nationalists of the cities whose sole subjects of conversation were oil, the Treaty, the League of Nations, and irrigation, and the uneducated fanatics of the holy cities to whom any form of progress was sin. During his last visit to Europe King Feisal seemed happy and contented. He felt that the treaty by which his country's independence had been secured was his work. He was delighted with the reception accorded him. "It was strange," he said to me, laughing like a boy, "that I, a Beduin, should be staying at Buckingham Palace. But your King is delightful and so easy to get on with. At first I was frightened of making mistakes, so I said nothing at all, but very soon I found myself as much at home as if I were talking to Ibn Saud."

The compliment was tremendous, for Feisal had been immensely impressed by the personality and the charm of his great Arabian rival when, after much difficulty, a meeting was arranged for them on a British battleship.

"In England everybody looks so young," continued Feisal. "Why don't *you* get old? You haven't changed at all since you made that appeal for peace to all the old sheikhs in the Damascene parliament when they wanted to attack the French

at Beyrouth. How shocked they were, but they listened to you ! That was thirteen years ago, wasn't it ? "

" An unlucky number," I remarked.

Feisal nodded. " I shan't be alive in another thirteen years," he said with sudden seriousness, and began to speak urgently of his plans for increasing the population of Iraq, for settling near Baghdad the Druse warriors exiled from Syria, for a Customs agreement with Palestine by which his country's trade might find an outlet to the Mediterranean.

" I came to England for a holiday," he said, " but I've worked so hard here being entertained—your hospitality is prodigious—that I shall have to go back to Iraq for that holiday."

But King Feisal had no holiday. He returned to his own country to find Assyrians and Arabs fighting on the frontier and Christian villages pillaged by Moslem troops. What he could have done to prevent the massacre of a people who regarded themselves as British subjects marooned among racial and religious enemies in the newly independent Iraq, nobody knows, for Feisal was already ill. A journey by air to Zurich—where the mountains agreed with him and he did not know enough German to disagree with his doctors—was not quick enough to save his life. Before he died, he wrote to me : ' You English are a great people, but you make one mistake over and over again. The Assyrians are only the last of many to suffer in the same way. You turned them into quite good imitations of British soldiers. They were uniformed and paid by Whitehall, officered by Britons, taught to speak English and to play English games. Their ambition was to be as English as possible. Then when you couldn't think what to do with them, you disarmed them for some extraordinary principle which nobody but you could understand, and handed them over defenceless to their natural enemies. I tried to save them. I wanted them to emigrate,

but Mar Shimun' (the Assyrian religious leader) 'was obstinate. He trusted to the British even after you had washed your hands of Iraq.'

Feisal ended his letter : 'I was happier in Syria. Everything then seemed possible. Damascus is the natural capital for an Arab kingdom. It was so beautiful when we took it from the Turks. I was young then and could laugh at politics. Do you remember how when General Gouraud was in Beyrouth, he used to ask you to dinner in order to give his Chief of Police time to examine your trunks ? You wanted to invent something for him to discover, and Tachsin Kadri encouraged you with his nonsense. It was all so fantastic—like a play—and we were very young ! Now even "the perfect aide-de-camp" is sober and serious. He does not enjoy an evening as we used to do in Damascus.'

When General Gouraud, as Governor of Paris, presented me in later years with a Geographical gold medal, he saluted me in front of the Garde Républicaine and addressed me as "Ma chère ennemie——" But still later, when we met in Belgium and, together with the Archbishop of the Congo, attended King Leopold's wedding-party, he said to me :

" It seems to me that we shared a friend. I know now that King Feisal—had we trusted him—would have been loyal to his own people and to both of ours."

THIRTEEN



*KING LEOPOLD
OF BELGIUM*

KING LEOPOLD OF BELGIUM

THE PRESENT KING OF THE BELGIANS WAS A SOLDIER BEFORE he was a schoolboy. Surely no one else has had so odd a beginning in life! When he was thirteen Prince Leopold told his father King Albert that he was "quite old enough to fight." It was in the last Great War and Belgium was struggling gallantly to stop the German advance. The young prince had heard about the newly-made trenches. "I want to see them," he said. In the spring of 1915 he had his wish. "The boy's got to work," said King Albert to a friend of mine. "I want him to dig till his hands are blistered."

The Crown Prince did more than this. Into the front line he went and fought like any private with the famous Twelfth Regiment. After six months in the trenches he was sent, much against his will, to Eton. "It was awfully difficult to go back to book learning," he said. No wonder he startled his fellow-schoolboys with his inside knowledge of soldiering and the war as Belgium was fighting it, back against the last wall. In later years the Duke of Gloucester told me that Leopold at Eton had been a 'tremendous fellow.'

"We didn't understand him to begin with," said the Duke. "I suppose he was a lot ahead of us in most sorts of knowledge. He was clever, too, with his hands and with his head. I'll never forget how he used to pick up an O.T.C. rifle by the end of the barrel and hold it straight out as if it were a fork."

Such an extraordinary boyhood was enough to make anyone serious. And King Leopold does take life decidedly

seriously. Even when I first met him on the occasion of his marriage to Princess Astrid of Sweden he did not, it seemed to me, smile easily. I had gone to Belgium for the Centenary of the Royal Geographical Society. The three foreign gold medallists, General Gouraud, Governor of Paris, an Archbishop from the Congo, bearded to the waist and wearing long white woollen robes, and I, were highly complimented by invitations to the small friendly royal castle of Laeken, just outside Brussels, where King Albert and Queen Elizabeth were giving a party for the young couple. They looked very happy and were obviously delighted with each other. I was presented to the Crown Prince and he talked at once about travel. "You know, if I hadn't got to be a king, I'd have liked to be captain and master of my own tramp steamer. I'd have a grand time going all over the world."

I remember replying that I thought a full-rigged sailing ship would be more romantic. "It would take too long," said the Prince. "I'd be too impatient. I like getting to places." His eyes wandered in search of Princess Astrid. When they found her he smiled. I don't think I've ever seen anyone look so glad. It was then I realized how good-looking the young man was with his splendidly thick hair and clear skin, and above all his look of strong, stalwart good health. In his full-dress uniform with lots of gold on it, he was a fine figure, but I've seen him look even better on a golf course. For Leopold is a very fine golfer, keen, concentrated, and supple. He takes games, languages, and his friends with nearly as much sensible seriousness as economics or political history.

Princess Astrid was different. It is usual to exaggerate the qualities of royalty. Queens are always supposed to be beautiful. And it is a fact that the Greek princesses have brought beauty to several European courts. The most beautiful woman I have ever seen was our Princess Andrew's daughter Cecilia, afterwards Grand Duchess of Hesse. She

was quite lovely, flushed, and triumphant after we'd won a treasure hunt at 'Broadlands,' then Lord Mount Temple's house in Hampshire. She was beyond description at a Coronation Ball in the highest diamond crown imaginable, but I saw her once talking to Princess Astrid, and the Belgian Crown Princess was the more arresting figure. Whenever that exquisite lady talked to you she made you feel assured, interesting, and terrifically liked ! Her husband once said : " But she does like people enormously. That's her secret. She likes everybody so much, and is so pleased to see them that she takes it for granted they're glad to see her, too."

Before he became king, Leopold had his wish. He travelled a great deal with his incomparable princess. They went round the world together. They ski-ed, mountain climbed, both of them experts, wherever Europe offered the best snows or the worst rocks. They went to the Congo, Belgium's native empire in the very middle of Africa. There the future king worked in shorts and open shirt, or in tropical uniform with a sun helmet on his exceedingly good-looking head like any colonial administrator. He took a lot of interest in the natives, talked to them and asked them what they liked best to eat, and how they grew it. He told the local officials that they must learn the dialects. " You lose half the sense when you talk through an interpreter," he said, and added that the natives must be encouraged to work on their own land. " You'll have to arrange some system under which they can sell what they grow at a reasonable profit."

When Queen Astrid—greatly loved—was killed in a motor accident, young, happy, on holiday with a map of the mountains they were going to climb open on her knees, King Leopold lost half his life. The rest, I think, he shut up inside himself. He does not easily give his confidence. He is a good friend, but he expects full measure of loyalty and consideration from his intimates. At Kitsbuhl, he takes considerable

trouble to be agreeable to other skiers. If they accept his reserves they find him a good companion. He is one of the dozen or so really fearless people I have met. But his life has been exceptionally hard. Too much has been taken from him. He has been obliged to make for himself a new character. Resistance and endurance are among the qualities he has intentionally developed. For him now, there is little indecision. He makes up his mind quickly and acts. When I told him the Arab proverb : "First think, then act, then speak—if you must," he retorted : "Thought and action should be simultaneous. They are complementary—especially in these days." I asked him if he would rather have lived in an earlier and easier century. He replied : "I don't know. I like being fully occupied and the issue for us in Belgium is clear. It's summed up in one word, 'neutrality!'"

Not long ago I met King Leopold at an English country-house. His face had hardened. He smiled on few occasions. He talked seriously about world politics, history, antiquities in Egypt, tropical medicine—he had started a special research clinic in Brussels when he came back from the Congo—birds, the necessity of speaking foreign languages, and the jumping powers of Irish horses. But always it seemed to me in the back of his mind, were the difficulties of Belgium and his duties to her.

He was still a good golfer. He beat our host very early in the morning, long before any of his fellow-guests thought of getting up. He has always been a good talker, but his ideas now are fixed. His patriotism has become a religion. Speaking Flemish and French equally well, he has tried for years to unite the many parties in the little kingdom which fought so bravely and suffered so much in the last war, and which has suffered as gravely in the economic depression. As king, he insists on hearing the views of all the party leaders.

On equal terms, asking hard questions, he has met Socialists,

Communists, Catholics, Rexists, Liberals, the few Belgian Nazis, Flemish, and Walloon Nationalists. For like other countries, only under the threat of war is Belgium united. And it has been the King's chief business through years of grave political and economic strife to preach unity and tolerance.

Leopold, a soldier at fourteen, has always insisted to the rest of Europe that peace is the only possible basis for economic recovery, and that every nation must share and share alike in a prosperity internationally planned. I remember him saying to a friend: "You don't quite understand. To us neutrality has become far more than a political question. It is our honour and our faith." His public pronouncement on the same subject was: "Our geographical position compels us to maintain sufficient forces to dissuade any of our neighbours from using our territory in order to attack another state. In fulfilling this mission, Belgium in no mean fashion collaborates in the preservation of peace in Western Europe."

It is quite true. Belgium sufficiently strong and well armed should be a protective barrier between any hostile Western Powers. Her neutrality, therefore, is not selfish. So long as smallneighbouring Holland, pathetically vulnerable, is not attacked, King Leopold the soldier is right to maintain his country's neutrality as the keystone of peace. "But if attacked," says Leopold, "we shall defend ourselves with the same spirit as in 1914, and with ten times the force."

The wisest thing I've heard this wise young king say is: "There can never be peace in Europe except on a basis of equality." For like his father, our staunch ally, King Albert (who said: "Disarmament will never take place until a sensible balance of power"—which means equality between the nations—"is restored"), Belgium's ruler working night and day to guard his country, ready to lead its defence in the

front line, believes that peace can only be assured by all nations working together for international trade and prosperity.

To-day he can be happy in one thing—that the two races in Belgium, Flemings and Walloons, differing in speech, religion, and customs, are united to serve their country. He is captain of a ship of state instead of the tramp steamer of which he talked to me.

And his Prime Minister says: “Those who are near him in these days find in him the same great virtues of calm courage, the same ardent patriotism, the same faithfulness to the given word which made Albert I, in August 1914, the very centre of our resistance.”

FOURTEEN



*QUEEN WILHELMINA
OF THE NETHERLANDS*

QUEEN WILHELMINA

FOR ME WILHELMINA OF THE NETHERLANDS IS QUEEN VICTORIA and Queen Mary combined. She was not actually born a sovereign like Alphonso of Spain, but she succeeded her father when she was a small, light-haired child of ten. So she is by far the oldest established ruler in Europe.

For forty-nine years she has governed a country even more devoted, I think, to its own royal and famous 'House of Orange,' which gave us a very good King of England, than to the principle of monarchy. For the Dutch are stalwart and independent individualists, held to their Queen because, as Princess Juliana once said : "She is the hardest worker in the country."

The first time I met this exceedingly dignified and decided lady, who knows her own mind and speaks it with forcible common-sense, was when I was staying with one of her maids of honour in a Hans Andersen castle built of warm red brick standing four-square with a tower at each corner in the middle of a lake.

The Queen invited us to evening tea which happened at 10 p.m. Her Majesty sat on a sofa in the middle of a pleasantly furnished drawing-room with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch seascapes on the walls. The young girls among her attendants made and handed round the tea. I remember they carried small fans and wore white dresses hardly cut out at the neck.

The Queen has a firm way of saying things. I cannot imagine anyone arguing with her. On that occasion I had

come from Scandinavia and brought greetings from the Norwegian sovereigns who were soon to visit Holland. "Queen Maud asked me to tell you how very much she is looking forward to seeing your Majesty," I said. Queen Wilhelmina sighed. "She is so nice but so well-dressed. I shall have to order at least two new dresses, and that is such waste of time!" Then the Queen's face brightened. "But I shall be very glad to have them here," she said, "for I am most anxious to discuss economics with them. There is very little unemployment in Norway, I understand."

Here is the serious and, I think, the most natural side of Queen Wilhelmina. She thinks and works as a man. She takes a great deal of trouble to understand thoroughly all the matters of importance which are brought to her. Once she has grasped anything, she remembers it apparently for ever. Like Queen Mary, she makes sensible and comfortable conversation, thoroughly suited to the person she is with.

"I once wrote a book," she told me, "but I was only thirteen at the time." She must have been a child of strong character, for when threatened with some not very serious punishment, she told her mother, the Queen Regent: "If you send me to bed I shall appeal to my people from the balcony."

I suppose I asked Her Majesty what her book was about, for I remember her saying that it was one of the few things she had forgotten. "Since then I've had to be practical. I've been hostess to all Europe. I'm sure I've entertained more ministers than any other sovereign in the world. So many conferences have been held at The Hague! There has been so much argument about peace in this capital which—you remember—Villon described as the 'prettiest village in the world.' We have been busy making history instead of making war. I hope that will always be our part."

This was the first time I heard the Queen speak of Holland

as if, like the churches of old, it was a last and sure refuge. The Boer President Kruger, fugitive from the South African War, found peace in Holland. So did the Kaiser when he had destroyed his own Germany. Later, the Queen of the Netherlands—a small country, deeply tried by industrial unease and the threat of a misunderstood Communism, but with an empire in the East Indies—talked of neutrality as if it must be her people's religion. "We have not fought for a long time," she said, "but as a race we have worked very hard. There is an old saying, God made the world but the Dutch made Holland." Her Majesty referred to all the land reclaimed by draining it from the sea. For only Holland has added greatly to her size without taking an acre from any other nation. I remember the Queen that night as stalwart and strong, with an extraordinary knowledge of detail, dressed not at all in the fashion, putting on rimless spectacles to look at a map for which she had asked, questioning me eagerly about her own Dutch East Indies which I had recently visited and she had never seen. "I like travelling as an ordinary person," she said. "I think it is the only way to know about other countries, but I can never go far away."

The sensible questions continued: "What did you think of the relations between settlers and natives in Java?" asked the Queen, and she waited for a considered answer. Again and again I was reminded of Queen Mary and the late King George who sent for me to tell them about my African journeys. The King, I remember, was amused and interested by personal adventures, but the Queen, like Wilhelmina of Holland, asked one question after another in her deep voice, while she traced my route on a map spread over a good deal of blue brocade skirt. We each held a corner of it and I was afraid it would get torn!

The next time I met the only Queen in her own right who reigns to-day, was in the middle of a rainstorm at Het

Loo. This is a charming white palace in the woods which is also a model farm supplying all the royal kitchens and the public markets as well. Her Majesty was wearing strong tweeds, solid boots, and a waterproof, but scorned an umbrella. She never uses make-up. She does not smoke. She has the typical royal backbone, for she can stand up straight and unflinching while her companions, on occasions, long for a chair. Her concession to modernity is her admirably waved and dressed hair. But in the woods at Het Loo the rain ran down both our necks while the Queen talked about having played Red Indians in that same park when she was a child. "I did enjoy being a child," she said. "But you must enjoy being a Queen even more, don't you, Ma'am?" Wilhelmina of the Netherlands considered the question. "Yes," she replied at last. "One can get things done if one is a Queen—that is satisfactory!" In the rain with a damp lady-in-waiting beside her, she looked—as usual—sure of herself, cool, informed, and very much in command of the situation. "Now I must go and work," she said, although she had already spent most of the day in her study, her desk piled with papers. She gives her full attention to each document and she likes to be alone while she is studying the contents of innumerable ministerial boxes. The Queen gives advice but does not, I think, often take it.

She has entered—practically and intimately—into the lives of her people. There is nothing she does not know about them. She told me how cottages were furnished in the different provinces and what ingredients the peasants used in their local dishes. She has been carried across swollen floods, walked ankle-deep through the plough, visited fishing-fleets and lighthouses, farms and factories, showing complete knowledge of what goes on in each. She has watched manœuvres with the eyes of a staff officer and gone into the trenches with privates of the line. After forty-nine years as

titular and forty-one as actual Queen, she is part and parcel of the land she rules.

Once I asked Queen Wilhelmina what had most interested her when, as a girl of fifteen, already speaking French, English, German, Italian, and Spanish, she visited our country. "Oh, your policemen! They were wonderful! And the pipers at Windsor. But most of all your Queen Victoria. She took me for a drive and I've never seen anyone sit so straight. I couldn't believe she was smaller than me!"

What an interesting sight it must have been—the oldest Queen in Europe in dead black and a little girl Queen, blue-eyed, with a straight fringe across her forehead and leg-of-mutton sleeves to her starched white frock!

On another occasion when Her Majesty was talking of the many rulers who had visited Holland, either privately or for the various peace conferences at The Hague, I asked the Queen by whom she had been most impressed. She thought for a while and then she said: "The first person who seemed to me cleverer than any book was President Falière, but I met him in Paris." When I persisted with my question, saying: "Yes, Ma'am, but summing up matters to-day, which of the European statesmen or rulers do you consider has played the most effective part?"

"The two Kings of the Belgians," said the Queen.

I think she was right.

But Wilhelmina herself is a personage with few equals. She has, I am convinced, saved her own country from at least an experiment in Communism. She has maintained, after prodigious battle, the gold standard, and she is waging now an even more important campaign to keep at least one haven of peace in Western Europe. The Dutch were mighty soldiers and sailors some hundreds of years ago, when their fleets defeated ours at sea and their armies opposed the empire of Spain, but for centuries they have been merchants, civilizing

the Far East including Japan with their art and trade, developing an immense and prosperous Empire in the lovely East Indies. They have stood firm for peace behind their dykes. In defence of that same peace they are ready now to flood their hard-worked fields, their homely farms each with its windmill and its spotted cows that look like clean china ornaments on a mantelpiece. So they will lose all that the earth has yielded to their labour, but they will keep Holland.

In the difficult years of industrial depression, Her Majesty of the Netherlands said: "I do not think that any country will take the last steps to Communism when its citizens can walk past the palace windows opening straight into the street and see their Queen knitting in the windows." She added: "We all know each other too well."

Scarcely more than a year ago, Princess Juliana toasted her mother after dinner as "the silent personality behind the scenes." "Nobody knows for how much the Queen is responsible," she concluded.

But officers and officials know. One of them said to me: "She is the greatest '*man*' on the throne to-day." This is particularly interesting because Wilhelmina took the oath at her inauguration (a sovereign of the Netherlands is not crowned) as a man. "I swear," she said, forty-one years ago when she was eighteen, an unmarried girl, but already for eight years a queen, "that I will defend . . . the independence of the country . . . as a good *King* should." To this the President of the States General (corresponding to our Parliament) replied: "We will maintain your inviolability and your rights as *King*."

This year the Queen whom history must acknowledge great—like our Victoria—speaks as one who may be forced to man's ultimate task of fighting. "We will defend our frontiers no matter by whom they are threatened."

I have never seen her in uniform. Spectacled, at her desk,

saying gravely to a Minister : " This report does not coincide with so-and-so's of such a date," or " I require more information about —" some country or some person's point of view, she is Queen Victoria with every figure and fact in her brain and a considerable part to play in deciding the destiny of Europe.

In dark velvet with fine jewels, standing very straight, with a happy smile for her two grandchildren, or talking with direct intimacy to her friends, she is Queen Mary. Walking over her farms, riding through her woods, skating, sleighing in the sensible clothes she prefers to fashion, watching travel films, reading books about ' real people '—for she does not care for novels—she is herself an original and forceful personality. When, to her people—and now most of all to her soldiers—she says : " In love of freedom, of our national rights and independence I am one with you," this simple stalwart lady who has never shown fear, is the Holland of History.

" We shall fight if necessary but, to the last moment "—which means sacrificial destruction of half the land, under water—" we shall work for peace."

FIFTEEN



PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

‘THERE ARE NO CLOSED DOORS AT THE WHITE HOUSE.’ I don’t remember who said it to me, but I thought of this descriptive phrase while I was having tea with Mrs. Roosevelt in a pleasant and very simply furnished sitting-room gay with patterned chintz. There was a view of wide corridor beyond the open doors and suddenly—at express speed it seemed to me—along it came the President’s wheeled chair propelled by the President’s own muscular arms while his large, cheerful voice came ahead of him: “Hullo! Who have you got there?”

A breathless moment and I was shaking hands with the man whom America then regarded as the last and most insoluble of miracles.

“Tell me about camels. You have a way with them, I hear,” he suggested in a breezy way.

“Have you arranged a code for them?” I asked, remembering N.R.A.

“Oh, yes—we’re dealing with these all right,” and he fished a packet of Camel cigarettes out of his pocket and offered me one. In such irresponsible fashion began my acquaintanceship with Franklin Roosevelt.

Before it ended—on a decided difference of opinion—I had been bewildered and impressed by the man’s charm as well as by his prodigious vitality.

In Washington at the time there were those who described him as ‘a Tory anarchist,’ ‘a red-hot Socialist,’ ‘a country gentleman with all the prejudices of his class,’ ‘the most astute politician who ever reigned at the White House,’ ‘a

Gladstonian idealist,' and 'either the best or the last President America will ever have.'

A business man without illusions told me he had spent one of the most interesting hours of his life watching 'Franklin' handle a hostile deputation. "The men represented a trust which had been pretty well shorn. They were as tough as they are made and they went to the White House determined not to yield a cent. By the time they had been there half an hour the President had got 'em."

With a grim smile the business man added: "No bird would be safe on its bough with that man about!"

My first impression of Roosevelt was of a human dynamo generating energy all over the place. As soon as he entered his wife's sitting-room the atmosphere quickened. When he left—to meet Litvinoff newly arrived from Moscow—the whole place was empty. Double the vigour of an ordinary man's body has gone into that tremendous torso, hard-trained as an athlete's, so that the crippled legs are no more than the sign of a superhuman gallantry. And the mind which dictates to an appreciative, doubtful, or resentful but always surprised America is equally vital.

Seated at his desk in the octagonal room at the White House, the President seems to tower over the standing figures around him. I went to one of his informal Press conferences and watched from a sofa the crowd of journalists very much on their feet, baiting him with hard questions.

Victory, however, remained with the seated figure. The throng of young men seemed to shrink in stature.

"How do you do it?" I asked when the room emptied.

"Words are a good enough barrage if you know how to use them," returned the President, and it occurred to me that he had certainly mastered the art of verbal camouflage. I think it was then I asked him if he was out for 'painless Socialism,' and he retorted:

"Not Socialism but social justice. It is pretty obvious by now that some people could do with a little less and many with a good deal more. The whole trend of the world," he added, "is towards equalizing conditions. It is doubtful if the individual to-day can amass a vast fortune by means of some spectacular business monopoly except at the expense of his fellows. It is probable that further progress can only be achieved by men working together for their mutual benefit.

"We are trying things out, and if one theory doesn't succeed we scrap it and try another. You must remember we are a continent, not a nation. We have forty-eight different States, so that we can try experimental legislation in two or three without fixing a burden on the whole country in the shape of a Federal law. That's where we're better off than you in England."

One phrase of Roosevelt's impressed me very much. We were talking about the inelasticity of constitutional systems. "The principal object of every Government all over the world," he said, "seems to have been to impose the ideas of the last generation upon the present one. That's all wrong." Quick, candid, courageous, Roosevelt is not only in touch with modern thought but ahead of it.

He seemed to me to have a deep and genuine sympathy with working men and women, but I never thought of him as an idealist. There is not a grain of sentiment in his make-up.

It is thus that he differs from most of his compatriots whose sugar-sweet theories are always at war with the ruthlessness finding expression in Wall Street, in gangsters and G-men and racketeers, in the hiring of thugs armed with machine-guns to break strikes legalized by the unions.

Roosevelt is essentially a politician. He is, therefore, supremely adaptable. "Which do you believe in most, Roosevelt or America?" I asked him.

"Both," he said, and laughed.

It was comparatively early in the morning, but he had already dealt with business deputations, a conference, and the 'boys' of the Press with whom he was on the most familiar terms. He had also had a dip in the swimming-pool round which he propels himself rapidly and forcibly with bludgeon strokes of his exceptionally powerful arms. But he was not at all tired. He did not even give the impression of being hurried. He encouraged me to tell tales of politicians and diplomatists out of school. He was interested in the 'back doors,' as he called them, of all the countries I had visited.

"When I came into office," Roosevelt once said to me, "the machine was stalled. If one expedient wouldn't make it go, we had to try another."

Inevitably such a man is bound to be accused of instability. For without insincerity he is apt to discard Monday's ideas for a wholly new set on Thursday. I am always amazed when I hear business giants exclaim: "What will the man do next!" Or, in despairing accents: "He'd never dare to try that! He can't! It's impossible."

Nonsense.

Roosevelt would certainly try anything or everything. It is not a question of daring. He is a juggler convinced that it is better to do a lot of things; even the wrong things, than nothing at all. Hear him talking to farmers and labourers.

"If you have any ideas that will increase employment, write to me direct at the White House. There is plenty of money in Washington and I am here to see that you get it."

Such speeches reveal what I think is a genuine feeling of stewardship.

"Economics are no longer an exact science," he said on another occasion. And I thought how dangerous this theory must seem to big business, shorn by taxation but still militant. I was enthralled by the man's assurance which is at once his armour and his battle-flag. His amazing smile, composite

of vigour and courage and the joy of a fight—any fight—is more effective than other men's words. All his gestures are on a large scale. He seems to be always on the brink of action. He gives the impression of pausing—not resting—before some prodigious creation.

For Roosevelt can never rest. He can never relax. Not for one single moment can he let up on himself. He must never show depression, doubt, or exhaustion, for he is the force which keeps the machine working.

Marie of Roumania once said to me: "It's such fun being a Queen."

I think Roosevelt gets the same enjoyment out of being President. I saw him once pick up the telephone to answer a long-distance call. I don't know what New York or San Francisco was saying at the other end, but it goaded my host into a display of lightning force. "Go to it!" he shouted into the instrument. "Beat them to it! I'll say you can do it."

With such backing it would be an unworthy centurion who did not return to the battle refreshed.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Roosevelt seemed to me fundamentally pacifist. With every sympathy for democracy, with a genuine distaste for all forms of tyranny, they might help or want to help England or France, but not to the extent of fighting on a European front. The most important conversation I had with the President was on the subject of war. In typically forceful fashion Roosevelt expressed what may be one of his few unchanging convictions.

"War," he said, "is just as much a crime commercially as ethically. There's not a nation living can afford to make another war. There's not a nation can afford even to win one! Ninety per cent of the world is pacifist at heart. All ordinary, commonplace people are pacifist and they have a right to peace. The era of fighting to get more territory

should be at an end with other forms of barbarism. Even native races have reached the point where they aren't going to be ruled by whites. In fact nobody these days is going to be ruled financially or politically by foreigners.

"Look at South America! Every republic there is crying out against the obligations incurred by the acceptance of those foreign loans on which their prosperity has been built. Foreign loans are so much money poured down the drain. You're lucky if it isn't so much money turned into arms against you!" He added: "We got nothing out of the last war. What could we possibly get out of another?"

Stung by such inaccuracies I protested: "You went into the last war a debtor nation. You came out of it the world's creditor, with so much gold in your vaults that you were choked with it. It was your own fault that you gambled yourselves into an inevitable slump."

Roosevelt likes hard speech. "We are still your creditors," he said.

"For less—so far less—than *we* are creditors to the rest of our mutual allies who failed to pay us much more than we owed you. We were sufficiently generous to cancel all war debts to us, although we'd suffered a hundred times your losses. You should have been at least equally open-handed for all the years of the war we'd been buying from you. You had most of our money already in your coffers!"

"There's some sense in that," acknowledged Roosevelt, "but what about the next war?"

"It will be no more your concern than ours," I told him, "for it'll be fought, not between nations, but between ideas. It'll be a war of civilisation against savagery. We're no more unselfish than you are, so we shall put off fighting as long as possible. But I suppose there'll come a moment when the ordinary Englishman will say: 'That's enough. There's been too much force and violence. Europe has suffered

enough. It's got to end.' We shall fight the next war as a crusade."

"Against whom?" asked Roosevelt.

We both laughed. "There's nothing to choose between Russia and Germany," I said, and the talk turned to Moscow. The President thought Bolshevism might perhaps eventually evolve a satisfactory pattern for living without force or tyranny. "But it may take a long time," he said.

When I asked him if he approved of financing trade with the Soviets, he replied: "Our recognition of Russia had little to do with trade. Fundamentally the two peoples have something in common. It would be ridiculous to ignore the existence of 160,000,000 people with a stable Government just because, a generation ago, a wholly different Government—one might almost say a wholly different country—acted against our interests. The period of revolution in Russia is over. The period of reconstruction has begun and every country must of necessity be interested in the final form that reconstruction is going to take."

Roosevelt expressed the feelings of average America when he said to me: "The tendency of the world is to become regional and the continent of the U.S.A. is very nearly self-sufficient. I'm inclined to think world trade is becoming less and less feasible. India is making her own cotton goods. Brazil is building her own factories. Germany is determined to grow her own food instead of importing.

"If you study the question you'll find that trade problems, without being necessarily insular or national, are definitely regional. Your Empire policy is an illustration of this. So is my belief in free trade"—pause and a smile—"between the forty-eight countries of the U.S.A. continent! You see, every land has got to find the nearest and the most reciprocative markets."

Such speeches as these deserved, I thought, an audience

beyond the walls of the White House. "I must write something about you," I said. "I'll be very tactful. I won't repeat any of the really exciting things you've said, or any of your opinions about European rulers or English Ministers"—indeed some of these would have caused a hurricane—"but you must let me do an interview."

Between telephone calls and listening to my tales of adventure in the back-of-beyond, the President gave careless consent, but he afterwards withdrew it. "I guess some of you folks would think I said too much," he told a harassed political secretary.

Yet much of what the President said has proved to be correct. Like America itself, he has always been concerned with the day after to-morrow or the year after next. Like the skyline of New York—frontier to us of a foreign continent—his is the stimulus of a new civilization where individuals are in the crucible, with race, speech, and religion. To-day, while big business still battles for its ancient profits, there is hardly an intellectual theorizing about the evolution of humanity between Washington and Chicago who does not visualize—in more or less tentative speculation—the possibility of revolution. Its form none care to prophecy. Its leaders are not yet known. 'Ten million unemployed. It can't go on. Something must happen.'

There is unease at the bottom of America's insistent isolation. She may have sufficient difficulties of her own without shouldering those of Europe. Roosevelt knew this years ago when he first came into office. I believe he realized that the time had passed for colossal differences in wealth and in the general standard of living. Business America laughed at what it described as the President's 'Sunday School Revolution complete with blue ribbon and woolly lamb.' But the man who enjoys power, without any concern for its perquisites, may have seen that the Book of Genesis

had to be rewritten. He may have known that a fundamental upheaval was inevitable. He certainly played for a long drawn-out constitutional revolution, based on a change of thought as well as of working conditions. Once he said to me: "I can't imagine why we flatter ourselves on being civilized. When history comes to be written we shall certainly be considered the last of the barbarians. For we have perfected the art of killing, while we hardly know the first letters of the alphabet with regard to living."

During the same conversation he flung out an impatient criticism of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, whose Socialism he considered inadequate.

It may have been a greater change than any we visualized which Roosevelt considered essential if the great American continent were to continue united in the van of civilization. To my mind the President—although he is primarily a politician and an extremely ambitious one—is never likely to juggle with phrases which mean nothing at all. Perhaps he has been influenced to a certain extent by Mrs. Roosevelt who is the stronger—perhaps the narrower—Socialist of the two, but I repeat he is undoubtedly in sympathy with the reactions and the needs of the ordinary working man. He would, I believe, always wait for what he considers the right moment to place a moral issue before a political one. But when he criticizes he is sincere, and I cannot imagine him subscribing to any sentimental excuse. He is a fighter. He knows that his country may have to fight, but he is determined that she shall not do so unless it is necessary and unavoidable. War is abhorrent to both the Roosevelts, but so is tyranny. "Let us see what the people think about it," says the President, but by the people he means every American on 'Main Street,' not the Eagles of Wall Street.

SIXTEEN



*THE MAN OF
MASS PRODUCTION*
HENRY FORD

THE MAN OF MASS PRODUCTION—HENRY FORD

AN ENORMOUS CAR MET ME AT THE STATION IN DETROIT. A neat and discreet young man informed me that Mr. Ford was glad to have me visit the town and that he would be equally glad for me to see anything I wanted—except himself. The conversation proceeded something like this :

“ Is Mr. Ford in Detroit ? ”

“ I guess he may have gone away.”

“ Where to ? ”

“ Maybe he’ll have gone to Washington.”

“ When did he go ? ”

“ Waal, I haven’t heard of him since this morning.”

“ Can’t we find out at his house ? ”

“ I guess they won’t know any more. Mr. Ford gets about a lot.”

“ But somebody must know where he is.”

“ Mr. Bennett might know——”

“ We’ll get hold of him then.”

“ I guess he’s gone places. His secretary can’t exactly say where.”

So it went on. Obviously it was much easier to talk familiarly with any European monarch than to have a glimpse of Henry Ford. Never have I known a better-organized smoke-service. Mr. Ford always knew exactly where his car had taken me, what I had asked about wages or the rolling-belt system, and to which of the foremen I had talked, but nobody ever knew where Mr. Ford was. There had been threats to kidnap his son. There had been rumours that the motor magnate would stand as a Republican at the next

presidential election. There were engaging stories of Mr. Ford too busy to have breakfast, retreating into the garden to eat an apple, and then disappearing.

Superlatively trained secretaries hadn't the least idea where. No, he wasn't at his home. No, they didn't think he was in town. Mr. Bennett would certainly ask Mrs. Ford, but before the Joan of Henry's Darby would say anything definite, Mr. Bennett himself had faded out of reach. At last after I had inspected everything from Boy Scouts to car-spraying apparatus, Mr. Ford decided he would like to see me. Suddenly everybody knew just what he was doing and it would apparently be convenient for me to visit him at any time! The car swept me out beyond the city confines to the town of its own where the arbiter of the motor industry, and the high priest of mass production, has his offices. They consist largely of windows and they produce the effect of a laboratory or surgery combined with an artistically arranged museum. Henry Ford, richest of America's multi-millionaires, behind a moderate desk, was on the defensive. No two persons' impressions of anybody are the same. Probably mine of my subsequent host was superficial, but the first thing I noticed was the disarming clarity of very blue eyes. Mr. Ford moved very little. He seemed to me slight, spare, a mixture of pale colours with his greying hair and 'indoor' skin. The whole effect was rather sparse. He had a pleasant, monotonous voice without modulations. He was careful of what he said although it was only a casual meeting. But times were serious. Big business was fighting tooth and nail against 'a sentimental policy, disastrous rather than democratic,' and no doubt its captains had suffered at the hands of their critics.

I had come from Washington. The papers had reported my meetings with Roosevelt. "It'll take twenty-five years to undo the harm that man is doing," opined Mr. Ford, but

without any visible emotion. "What we're being put through is a revolution."

I suggested that it was a Sunday-school affair with blue eagles instead of the red flag and that staggering presidential smile where rifles might have been.

"America was just sitting down and waiting for the Day of Judgment," I insisted.

My host showed a flash of humour. It was very dry. "Some of my friends certainly had a 'latter day' feeling," he acknowledged. "They thought of their millions frozen in Trust Companies and pulled long faces. I've never seen them so kind o' humble."

"And what do you feel?" I asked.

"There's nothing wrong with America," replied Henry Ford. "The country's so strong nothing will stop its eventual recovery. The fellows at Washington know that. Whatever they pull out of the political hat, improvement will go on just the same, but they can do a lot to slow it down."

Later he confessed: "Business to the average American has ceased to mean buying and selling. For a long time it's just been a gamble. We've got the richest country in the world, a country so preposterously rich that it can supply its own needs a hundred times over and still have a surplus. There's no cause for any man to starve. It's a matter of bad distribution. I don't hold with the idea that there's a deficiency of purchasing power with regard to production. America's needs are increasing every year. The national thermometer is the motor trade. If the Government would get going over the problems of distribution instead of figuring out that they're gods and getting the hell of a kick out of fixing the price of gold at exactly ten every morning, we might see a quick improvement."

Henry Ford, a mixture of provincial-minded idealist (for in spite of his power and his wealth, he is still to my mind a

small-town man, with a limited outlook) and a ruthless individualist, is harder than the proverbial nails where business is concerned. He pays the highest daily rates in U.S.A. and gives no contracts to wage-earners, so that a man coming back after eight hours on those Juggernauts of rolling belts, where his day's activity is confined to the repetitive action of a hand or an arm, might find instant dismissal handed to him with his pay-roll. It was difficult for me to credit this side of the man's character when he took me to see his employees' children dancing in the model school he had built. In a cane arm-chair he relaxed and, with his head leaning on a hand as if he were a little tired, he talked with understanding and intimate knowledge of the children and what they were going to do, or should do when they grew up. "That boy should go far—he's got machinery in the blood—and the other, the littlest one, has a fine head for figures. I'll put him into accounts. Ask him to figure out a sum. You won't be able to catch him out."

"And what about that girl? She looks alive."

"She's pretty, isn't she? Oh, we'll find her a good husband, but I reckon she'll find one for herself all right."

Of the girls I noticed he always said, with a contented little nod: "She'll marry." Here, I thought, is a beneficent dreamer, a little vague perhaps but full of charity and good intentions. Happily married himself, he would like to put all pretty girls into the protected position of his own contented wife. Gentle with rather a sweet smile, Henry Ford the idealist talked with extreme modesty of the schools, hospitals, and clinics he had built for his workers. He talked also of the theories on which he had built up his business. "A man's got to boost himself. Nobody else will do it for him. He's got to be a go-getter or somebody else will grab it first."

While Roosevelt, I think, is out to help the less efficient and to give failures a second chance, Mr. Ford talks as if a man could always succeed if he had the right stuff in him.

I should say he had no use for hard-luck stories or mistakes or misfits, and little, if any, sympathy with down-and-outs. Once he said: "I've never asked help myself and I don't often give it to those who *did* ask. A man's got to help himself. If he's any use he learns that at once."

With an entirely different Mr. Ford, similar only in the loose-jointed walk and straight-hanging light suit, I went to see what I called the chamber of horrors. Its exhibits were rival cars, disembowelled and dissected. Every make, European and American, was represented. "We take 'em to pieces and see if there's anything they can teach us."

"Do you often get hold of anything?"

"We learn what's wrong," said the self-made millionaire, his mouth like a trap. There was nothing gentle about him now. The mild blue eyes had become steel-keen. They saw everything. They criticized. My vision of pretty coloured loose-knitting—dreams of little girls marrying successful little boys who would be accountants or mechanics—vanished in favour of metal wire. Mr. Ford's glances were certainly metallic. His movements and ideas were simultaneous. I remembered a swift grey snake effectively dealing with a rival. The latter was swallowed for breakfast and the bulge scarcely showed.

"American workers don't need unions. They don't want them," said Mr. Ford. "It's all political eyewash, and dangerous at that. Your unions in Britain have a hundred years of growth behind them. They've learned how to handle their power. You English are grown up. I guess there's nothing savage left in you. But we're not a long way from barbarity, and you'll see the unions will be just another racket. It'll be a fight with machine-guns and thugs on both sides. I wouldn't wonder if we got some kind of civil war. Half our workers aren't American at all. They're fresh from the chaos of Europe, uneducated, with no ideas but guns or knives. Those are the men, some of them without a word of

good American, into whose hands the President is putting a power that only an army could break."

Business men working their way up the ladder, or precariously at the top of it, said: "You can't help admiring Henry Ford. Look where he's got."

Foremen and mechanics acknowledged: "There's no one to beat him at the job," but I never heard a word of affection. "I don't exactly like him," said an Irishman, "but I'd vote for him as President."

Mr. Ford, Puritan and pacifist, is definitely more interested in America than in anything outside the forty-eight States. I remember only one conversation about the world in general. During the course of this, the man of business but not of world affairs said: "It would be a crime for America to make another war. She's so strong she doesn't need to make a war. She can get what she wants without it!"

I asked: "Can't you imagine any circumstances in which the United States would have to make war?"

"No," said Mr. Ford, "it's our business to make peace, not war."

Alone in big business, Henry Ford has stuck solid and unyielding to his precepts, an opponent of waste, of the dole, of experimental charity under the guise of subsidies, of inflation, of the Sunday-school attitude of N.R.A. and its attendants Acts.

"You can't have authority without experience," he said, and I remembered Secretary of Labour Frances Perkins' confession to me: "Ninety per cent of the strikes with which my department have to deal are caused by the employer's objection to collective bargaining."

When I repeated this to Detroit's Colossus he said curtly: "I have never bargained in my life. When I could afford a thing I've bought it and paid for it. When the price was too high, I've done without. I guess I'm too old to change now."

SEVENTEEN



*BENITO MUSSOLINI
KING ZOG
AND SOME OTHERS*

BENITO MUSSOLINI, KING ZOG, AND SOME OTHERS

IN THE AUGUST OF 1920 I FOUND MYSELF—MOST UNWILLINGLY—at Milan. I had not meant to be there at all and when I say ‘there,’ it means only the railway station. For I was on my way to visit King Feisal whose Syrian throne had collapsed and who was—for the moment—an exile at Cernobbio, on Lago Maggiore. But no train that particular week went farther than Milan. I cannot remember exactly what the Communists had done, but it was certainly effective in stopping the traffic. The city walls, I understood, were already sand bagged. The red flag flew. All this did not disturb me, for, in those days, Arab politics seemed to me much more important than European. But my luggage was in a locked van, including some of the equipment for my first journey across the Libyan desert in search of Kufra—that secret and sacred ‘city’ with which Africa mocked the curiosity of Europe. It is long ago, but I still remember the bitterness and the fury with which I stared at the van. It assumed the proportions of a fortress to be stormed. I must have allies. Impetuously I turned to a short, broad-shouldered man in a shabby suit, who happened to be on the platform. He looked strong. He also looked cross and he seemed to have a certain amount of authority. To him I appealed for help. “I MUST get my luggage. I’VE GOT to get to Cernobbio!” I told him, all in capital letters, but he did not smile. At the time I was surprised, for I had sufficient sense to realize the unusual absurdity of my mission. For I was seeking an Arab king

in order to obtain from him an introduction—as from one Prince of Islam to another—to the Emir Idris es Senussi, ruler of an unknown desert and of the most turbulent *tariq*¹ in North Africa. With gravity, the square man in an ill-fitting dark suit said: “I will help you. There will be no difficulty.”

“But it is locked!” I said.

“Yes,” said Benito Mussolini, then Editor of *Il Popolo*, and he said no more except to send some nondescript young man for tools. The door of the luggage van was wrenched open—I suppose, before this happened, it had been discovered there was no key. But I don’t remember anything about a key—only the effective smashing of fastenings and the way my luggage came out as if it were tooth-paste squeezed out of a tube.

Later I found myself seated at a table in the buffet. I have a vague recollection of red plush, but this is probably a mistake, although, of course, it was long before the magnificent new station was built. Mussolini ordered what he said was tea, but I think it must have been coffee—or a mixture of both—for it was very nasty. By way of apology he said: “It seems even the smallest possible revolution interferes with food.”

“Are you having a revolution?” I asked, dismayed—not at all for Italy although I had spent a year in the country to finish my education in a manner suited to the daughters of country squires. What I thought of was the letter to Sayed Idris and how persuasive I could induce King Feisal to make it!

But I was mildly surprised when my host retorted: “Not yet!” He then asked me what I was going to do and when I told him, he said: “A preposterous journey for a woman, but of course you won’t get farther than Benghazi where some man, I suppose, will make love to you. Probably you

¹ Sect—literally, ‘way’ of thinking.

won't want to go farther if it is the right man." I thought such talk was very foolish, but decided that men were more interested in love than women. "All the same it is a good story—tell me more and I will write it," added Mussolini.

Earnestly, and no doubt with extreme tediousness, I related my ambitions for Arab unity. At that time, influenced by King Feisal, of whom I had seen a good deal the previous spring in Damascus, I imagined there might be some form of United States—democratic rather than feudal and religious after the pattern of Enver Pasha—between Fez and Baghdad. It was a childish conception, but I confided it to Mussolini. He said: "Yes, yes, but tell me about yourself. That is much more interesting. What do you want to do with your own life?"

Being young and melodramatic I replied—with great solemnity—"I want to live dangerously."

"What a folly!" exclaimed the man, leaning across the table, his elbows firmly planted, his eyes curiously inexpressive. They seemed to be lidless. "It is on occasions useful to think dangerously. Indeed I am never afraid to do that. But I want to live *alone*."

At the time I thought of Benito Mussolini as an editor and was impressed because he was the first I had met. It seemed to me an interesting and influential thing to be. But in later years I decided that the phrase 'I want to live alone' represented the strength and weakness of Italy's Dictator. For the younger Mussolini, lover of many women none of whom, I imagine, meant much more to him than a momentary sensation of success, was influenced only by his brother Arnaldo. In the biography he wrote of that brother, to whom in the first days of his power he telephoned at length every evening from Rome, the Duce shows unexpected humanity and even a few doubts.

The next time I saw Mussolini was after a prolonged visit

to Albania. I had met King Alexander of Yugoslavia at Monastir where Macedonian Comitadjis were—to his own amusement—planning for this iron man what they called ‘a convenient death.’ I had talked with King Zog and ridden far up into the northern hills to stay with his rival, the great Christian chieftain, Marco Joni. Incidentally, I had made friends with the Italian Minister at Tirana, the fantastic capital where death was a matter of course, providing it was ‘a good murder’ which meant a long-distance shot in the heart—from the front, not from the back. For in Albania blood feuds were a respectable concomitant of existence. They were carried out more efficiently than road-building or any other municipal activity. How the Duce heard of my travels I don’t know, but he invited me to go and see him on my way back through Rome. I found him seated, behind a large desk under a colossal portrait of himself, far off at the end of a room, across what seemed to me an unnecessary acre of polished wood. I thought he was not going to get up to meet me, so I stood at a little distance with my hand held out. There was, I thought, a noticeable pause before the Duce, squarer than ever, with the unblinking stare consciously emphasized, rose and kissed my fingers with a mixture of energy and indifference. “So you are not nervous of me?” he said.

“No, why should I be?”

“Most people are.”

The Duce evidently studied his effects, but was—in those first years—a trifle amused by them. He said: “Well, was I right—did somebody make love to you at Benghazi?”

“No,” I said. “You weren’t right in anything. I got to Kufra.”

“I know you did. That journey of yours will be useful to us some day—when I send an army in your steps.”

“You won’t get it over the dunes,” I said.

I was wrong, for in 1931, ten years to the week after I slipped into the Senussi capital disguised as an Arab woman with a caravan of blacks and bedouin half dead of thirst, an Italian mechanized force with planes and tanks arrived in the hitherto secret and sacred valley.

"I shall 'get it'—as you say—anywhere I choose," retorted the Duce. "That is what an army is for!"

But he wanted to talk about Albania. "It is not a country," he said. "It is not even a possibility. Italian money may hold it together, but if there were another war, Italian arms would be needed to protect it."

He asked a great many questions, all of them shrewd, and gradually his pose, which I thought then was a matter of self-defence, relaxed. He ceased to look as if all his angles were artificial and his strong features became impressive instead of theatrical. "What did you think of Zog?" he asked.

"He is charming but not solid," I replied. Then I told him of my first meeting with the good-looking young chieftain, a Moslem born of an ancient tribal family (the Mati), whose name means 'the bird,' and who it is said is the objective of several hundred blood feuds. My husband and I had been staying in Tirana with General Sir Jocelyn Percy who organized and commanded the Albanian Police. Very early on the morning we intended to leave, King Zog invited us to the palace. An A.D.C. with correct golden aiglettes came to fetch us, and I remember that while he leaned out of the car window to direct the driver, these caught on the outside handle and it was so difficult to disentangle him that I had visions of arriving at the palace with a splendid young officer hanging upon the door. This incident naturally made the unfortunate A.D.C. even more nervous than he had been on his arrival, when he found us in travelling tweeds unsuited, he insisted, to an audience. "You will remember, won't you, to walk

backwards and to bow three times," he urged upon my husband.

"No," retorted that invariably effective and imperturbable man, accustomed to levees at St. James's.

Zog received us in an admirably plain and workmanlike study. If I remember rightly there was nothing superfluous in the way of pictures or furniture. The King was a tall, slight, graceful, and therefore rather pathetic figure. For, ruling a wild, courageous, indeterminate people, weakened by a thousand personal dissents, he gave no impression of force. In excellent German, he talked wisely and intelligently of Albania, but without, I thought, much vision. No doubt, he enjoyed being king. The position certainly brought him a good deal of wealth. It enabled him—later—to marry a charming and beautiful woman. He began as a protégé of Yugo-Slavia in opposition to Fan Noli—a liberal and a priest—whose rule was upset by Zog's second attempt at revolution. Then he turned his coat for the benefit of Italy, because he believed, rightly I think, that a brilliant Western ally with the culture and what seemed to him the wealth of Rome, could do more for Albania than the new and not altogether comfortable alliance of Croats and Slovenes on his eastern frontier. But when Zog accepted every form of assistance from Italy, including subsidies and technical experts, he must have known that he could only be a puppet. It was the easy way, the lavish way he chose both for himself and his country. Before that first meeting, during which the new King discussed with my husband Sir Jocelyn's admirable police, who kept peace by force of common sense and pluck, and who—when invasion came—were ready to fight with rifles instead of words, I had heard the usual tales pertaining to a Balkan personality. Zog was credited with being a mighty warrior. Had not seven horses been killed under him when he led his own tribesmen against Montenegro? As a

lover he had suffered even more dramatically, for legend ran that the girl he loved had been shot by her own obstinate father and her body sent to Zog, with the result that the whole family were exterminated as soon as the rejected suitor came to the Throne. Nonsense probably, but I told all this to the Duce and added: "Zog is clever enough. I dare say he is an honest patriot. He certainly has charm, but I can't imagine him a hero, and I'm quite sure he loves political intrigue."

I remember the hard shrewdness in the Duce's face as he said: "We are pouring money into the country and we shall have to go on doing so, or Zog will tumble back into the arms of Yugo-Slavia. He thinks he has the best of us because that choice is always open to him, but some day we'll have a return for our money and our work. You know that anything which gets done over there is done by *us*."

I think this conversation took place in the summer of 1930, for it was—as I have said—after my second visit to Albania, on which it had been intended that I should direct a colour film of tribal life in the north. The scenario was to have been written by the producer, Harold Powell, and I well remember his dry weariness of diction when he failed to procure anything delectable for supper. "I think I've got the second serial rights of a chicken which has been eaten before." This also I told to Mussolini when he became too serious about the Adriatic. And I made him laugh with the tale of the A.D.C. who, walking backwards the whole length of Zog's study, according to his own precepts, bowed for the third time within range of the door, stepped briskly backwards, caught his heel in one of the gigantic spittoons and sat down in it heavily! But back we came to the Adriatic: "You have so many seas which you label your own. We must at least have one," said the Duce.

The following year Italy agreed to lend Albania an annual £400,000 in gold without interest, in order to develop the

country on modern lines—with the help of a host of Italian engineers, doctors, architects, surveyors, mechanics, industrialists and financiers, officers and officials.

When I next saw King Zog—at his small seaside house at Durazzo—built so near the water that when we sat on the porch, I felt we were in a boat, I spoke about Albania's position with regard to Italy. I can't remember what the King said. He always spoke with deferential courtesy to his guests. But his arguments were of the age-old Eastern pattern. He was clever enough to realize the difficulties of his position. But he believed himself cleverer than any man could be, for he thought it possible—in debt to Italy for the continued stability of his throne—to play the ambitions of his Latin neighbour against those of Yugo-Slavia. Failure was inevitable, given the dislike of the Christian tribesmen, hardly civilized, in the north and of the reactionary Moslem merchants of the towns for any foreign interference, unless Zog had chosen to be—as he never was—an honest centurion of Rome.

Facing the Duce across his unnecessarily enormous desk, I asked him if he was content with what he had achieved. "No," he replied. A pause and then, "If I were content, I should be dead."

We talked of North Africa, which I had known since 1919 when I travelled—chiefly on camels—from Morocco to Abyssinia. The Duce was chiefly interested in my journeys by Fiat lorry across the narrow strip of Tripolitania which, in 1919, was all that pre-Fascist Italy could hold—within a succession of barbed-wire fences—against marauding Arabs. He knew that I had accompanied Signor Pastori when, in April and May of the same year, he took the first wheeled transport from Wad Medeni in the Sudan, across Italian Eritrea to red-hot Massawa suitably upon the Red Sea.

"What did you think then of our colonization?" he asked.

and he was not annoyed when I said: "Really, it hardly existed in North Africa except in the coastal towns."

I told him how the officers I had met bemoaned their exile. At first they used to say: "See, there is a camel—how picturesque! And there is a palm tree—very attractive! But how little life there is and how little movement!" When sirocco began to blow or the 'fifty-day wind,' they groaned: "It is not human. How can one make oneself a life?"

"Go back," ordered Mussolini, "and see how it is changed."

He was right. General Balbo's Tripolitania to-day is in the first rank of colonial achievements.

It is in his autobiography, I think, that Mussolini writes: "I shall make my own life a masterpiece." That he has never done. For he is never satisfied. No success is for him complete. How could it be, for he is hampered by his personal interpretation of the Roman ideal. When he wrote: "I am desperately Italian," he should have substituted the word 'Roman.' For, nearly ten years ago, when he talked to me of North Africa, he saw it as the granary of Cæsar's empire, the training-ground of Legions. He protested: "So much Italian industry has been wasted for the benefit of France in Tunisia. That is ridiculous. I need every Italian working to the utmost for his own country. I need more and more Italians."

Laughing, I said: "That is even more than Cæsar demanded."

"But it's not difficult," retorted the Duce. "Have you been south of Naples? What is the chief production of the towns and villages there—children, of course. I shall increase that sort of production by subsidizing it. Thus I shall get as many Italians as I need."

"What are you going to do with them?"

"Colonize," he said.

I told the Duce how pleasant it had been to leave the savagery of Northern Abyssinia¹—where the complete lack of any form of government or civil organization was an irritant as well as a danger—for Eritrea, which even in 1919 was well-run and peaceful, although not yet developed on modern lines. He said : “ It is absurd, of course, this cutting up of Africa into artificial slices. Eritrea and Abyssinia have been the same regional proposition for a thousand years. One depends on the other. There are no frontiers, human or geographical. The Romans were the best colonists in the world. The Dutch are probably the next best. The French only colonize for the sake of man-power and you British for raw material. When I begin it will be in the spirit of creation.”

“ Re-creation,” I interpolated, and quoted “ *Civus Romanus sum.*”

The Duce laughed : “ Because I was wrong about your getting to Kufra, shall I give you something ? ” he asked.

“ What ? ”

Mussolini looked a trifle surprised. “ I thought you might like a photograph.”

“ I haven’t even got one of my husband.”

“ Do you love him ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Good. Women are always much more agreeable when they are in love. Well, what would you like ? ”

“ Give me something with which you’ve worked—it might bring me luck,” I said.

“ All right.” He looked at his desk. “ There are only pencils,” he said doubtfully, “ or a pen, but nobody can write with my nibs.”

“ Give me a pencil then,” I said, “ but I hope it’s indelible. Then you’ll be responsible for what I write.”

For the first time Mussolini looked at me as if I were a

¹ See *Red Sea to Blue Nile*. (Penguin edition.)

woman instead of a map, "I should think responsibility is the last thing you'd ask of any man!" he retorted.

So much has been written about the Duce. What is there left to say? What he has achieved for his own country is obvious to any traveller. No man, not even Hitler, has done more to re-create a nation, and the Duce was hampered by the quality of his material. The Germans are a fighting race who like being organized and disciplined. The Italians are the exact reverse.

Some years ago I had a casual conversation with Mussolini in Venice. From a palace window he looked down at the crowds which cheered him. His face was without expression, for he has perfected the glazed, bull-like stare and the clenched lips which he thinks suited to the character he has assumed. But when he turned from the window he made an unexpected gesture of impatience: "What bad material is there in the mass!" He exclaimed: "I am a worker without the proper tools, but I suppose a genius can do what he chooses with the most unsuitable material."

The Duce knows the limitations of his own people. For this reason he emphasizes and underlines the pride of their descent and the magnitude of what they must accomplish. The endless bombastic phrases plastered over every available wall are so many reminders that if left to himself the Italian would do as little as possible in a familiar rather than an effective way.

Of course the Duce is conceited! How could he help being so?

While he can keep peace, his creation will endure. If he had to fight a real war it would be shattered. For the average Italian is immensely proud of what has happened to him, but he does not enjoy it.

It is foolish to generalize about a nation and there may be good soldiers among the northern Italians, just as there are

hard workers among the young farmers and artisans, but the essential quality of Italy is to be found in her art and her family life, in her generous hospitality and the beauty which she gives to an appreciative world. Mussolini's new Roman empire must be one of peace if it is to endure.

In Venice I found myself telling the Duce's fortune. He was impatient and talked more than he would listen, so I asked him if he believed in destiny. Without thinking, he replied : "No! No!" and then added : "But I don't know—after all I cannot believe that I happened by accident."

The Duce was right to be confident about Abyssinia. There was no serious defence. The Italians proved themselves fine engineers. The speed and organization of their mechanized advance over six hundred miles, corrugated with mountains and seamed with precipitous ravines, deserves a tribute. My muleteers, in 1926, thought five miles a day was a remarkable march. It seemed to us, then, that nothing on wheels would ever surmount those cliffs of loose stones nailed together with thorns.

I doubt if Mussolini over-estimated the Abyssinian war. He had to exaggerate his achievement for the benefit of the populace. But his anxiety had been over the commercial, not the military aspects. As it turns out, he made no mistake then, but, in the summer of 1937, he very nearly made a grave mistake about France. By that time he was seeing few visitors, and he never received the foreign Ambassadors or Ministers. All his contacts were through Count Ciano, who has disliked France since his first failure with the great hostesses of Paris. To his august father-in-law he repeated again and again : "France is finished. She will never fight." He added : "She is more than half-way to revolution. Her end is inevitable."

In August 1937 it was an exception for Mussolini to receive an Englishwoman at the Palazzo Veneto, and even Violet

Trefusis, daughter of the brilliant Mrs. George Keppel, who lives in Florence and is one of those rare women whom I imagine has never been a disappointment to anyone, could not convince 'Il Vecchio'—as Italian peasants affectionately and intimately refer to their great man—that France was by no means finished. Mrs. Trefusis talks Italian as if it were her own tongue, so where she failed—after an hour of saying: "But I live in France. I know this. I've seen that—" it was not likely that I should succeed.

The Duce was surprised and puzzled that anyone of intelligence should try to mislead him. He repeated what he had heard from Count Ciano. It could have been read in the Paris Press—strikes, sabotage, agitators acknowledging themselves on the Russian pay-roll, making trouble with farmers who only wanted to be left in peace with their harvest. From Rome I drove through France and saw it all myself.

Mussolini would not understand that France at peace may be on the verge of ignominious disintegration, while France on the first day of war is ONE man facing the enemy and ready to stay there, armed or unarmed, until that enemy is defeated.

'There are those who have to be crushed by truth before they can understand it,' wrote Mussolini. Very nearly, those words became his epitaph. For, in 1937, he genuinely believed that he could take Tunisia from France. Emil Ludwig quotes him as saying: "A man in my position must be stupid once a week."

But to me the Duce said: "To lose opportunity is the worst, the unforgivable stupidity." Tunisia, it seemed, was his opportunity, for when Mussolini speaks of 'colonization,' it is on the lines of an Alexander peopling the roof of the world with the blue-eyed offspring of his soldiers.

"Native peoples have no equality of rights under Rome," he once said to me: "I shall give them justice, work, and

food. You British try to do much more and in the end you don't do as much."

It is my belief—with nothing to back it—that a year after those last conversations, in which Mussolini told his English visitors : " You are committing the last folly if you trust in France. She can give you no help. She cannot even help herself," Count Grandi, Minister of Justice, and Marshal Balbo, Governor of Tripolitania, were able to convince the Duce that Count Ciano was wrong. Roman gossip has dramatized this achievement. Edda Ciano, indomitable, ambitious, intelligent, with an unfair amount of charm when she relaxes her efforts to play 'L'Éminence Grise' to her great father's representation of a Borgia Pope, becomes the influence disappearing into the background. From my London acquaintance with her, I am sure it will be full of impetus and incident. In the foreground, backing Mussolini, first and most successful of European dictators, for he has not pitted his will-to-power against the natural inclinations and the good sense of his people, are the figures of a statesman and a soldier, both of whom know the world. The Air Marshal must have seen the Mareth Line in North Africa. He knows France can hold it. " Make no mistake," he said last August, " the French troops are magnificent."

Count Grandi was among the most popular as well as the best-informed Ambassadors in London. He used to say to me : " At heart I am a peasant of Bologna—that is where I belong." It was an appealing phrase, and it covered the shrewd sense and the generous understanding which Grandi brought to the study of a people who—in his own words—" always make the worst of themselves." He asked me once, with amusement and some impatience: " Why do you always pretend you won't fight? Why do you make such play of ignorance and folly? You are the most dangerous people in the world because you so misrepresent yourselves."

Grandi understood very well the qualities and the defects of England, for he took the trouble to meet all sorts of people. His knowledge must have been put at the service of his Leader, with Balbo's appreciation of French North Africa which—so long as France chooses—will most assuredly remain French.

One thing I told Mussolini at my last and least satisfactory meeting with him. For the moment, he visualized himself as Protector of Islam and was inclined to suppose Tunisians and Algerians discontented with French rule. "Not long ago," I said, "I asked an ordinary Arab working in his own olive-grove what he thought of French rule. He was of negroid descent and he could only speak his own colloquial Arabic. 'It is difficult for me to say,' he replied, 'for after all I AM French!'"

The Duce retorted: "I do not want to make such people into Italians, unless I can use them as soldiers." He added: "My duty to Italy comes before my duty to any other people—or to any single individual."

It was then I said to him: "You have done a great deal of good, but to a certain extent you are responsible for the savagery of to-day. For you originated—in 'civilized' Europe—the doctrine of force."

"It is a weapon, not a doctrine," retorted the Duce, "and its value depends on how it is used or misused."

EIGHTEEN



HAILE SELASSIE

I. REGENT OF ABYSSINIA

“SO YOU ARE A WOMAN AFTER ALL,” SAID RAS TAFARI, then Regent of Abyssinia, later the last Christian Emperor of the line of Solomon.

At the invitation of this remarkable man I had come on mule-back—three weeks’ journey it was—from Dire Dawa, frontier of French Somaliland, to the forest capital of Addis Ababa. The future Emperor Haile Selassie (Holy Trinity) received me in a pleasant house upon a hill. It was mud-built, but it had a European drawing-room—white walls, chintzes, and a thick carpet bordered with roses. Side by side on a sofa sat the then Regent, for he had not yet been crowned Emperor, and his wife, the Princess Menen. They wore similar long cloth cloaks, but Ras Tafari’s was royal blue and the future Empress’s black bordered with red. The white shawl-like garments which muffled their throats were fine as spiders’ webs.

It was when the Princess presented me with ‘the gift of good arrival’—an Abyssinian Court dress brocaded with many-coloured flowers and bordered with purple, blue, and gold, and I exclaimed with delight, insisting I must dress up in it at once—that the heir to the most difficult heritage in the world made his laughing remark, and added: “I thought you were much too fierce to care about silks.”

Obviously the guards and guides who had ridden with me for some 377 miles had told tales of my impatience. “I never knew a woman so hard,” the muleteers used to say when I refused to camp at midday and do nothing but talk and eat till after the following sunrise.

The Emperor-to-be spoke French and Arabic well. He talked with ease and confidence, using both languages to express his ideas. On that first visit of mine to Abyssinia he was a comparatively young man—politician, soldier, and social reformer, but still tentative because he realized the immensity of his problems. He was undoubtedly good-looking and he had inherited the dignity of his 3000-years-old lineage. I can imagine no circumstances under which this man would lose either dignity or distinction, but I never imagined him of strong character.

In those early days of our acquaintance we talked, of course, of an Abyssinia that disappeared with the Italian conquest and in the light of future events I am glad that I recorded the young ruler's views about his country.

"We only need the European form of progress because we are surrounded by it," he said. "That is at once a benefit and a misfortune. It will expedite our development, but we are afraid of being swamped by it."

The last remark was prophetic, but I suggested: "No flood of modernity could sweep the Abyssinian peasant off his feet!"

"Certainly," said the Regent, "there is a great difference between the townsman, lazy enough but not afraid of what is new, ready to welcome a foreigner and profit by his knowledge, and the suspicious hillman, fanatical in his isolation, refusing any suggestion to improve his lot with the unyielding phrase: 'This is the Habashi way!'"

Servants in white *chammas*,¹ their tight-fitting trousers like the legs of white storks, brought in the most delicious tea, but my host and hostess were fasting—it must have been one of the many lean days of austere Coptic Christianity—so I had to eat it alone.

"In one way," said the Regent, "townsfolk and peasants

¹ Shawls.

are alike. Their assurance approaches arrogance. It is a pity they have had to learn that there are adventurers among the red men, as we call you. Originally we took our knowledge of Europe from the chivalrous Portuguese who helped us in our long wars against tyrannical Moslems, and from the intellectual Jesuit priests who accompanied them. But now all sorts of foreigners come to Addis Ababa, and the Abyssinian has to learn to distinguish between good and bad."

Already while he was only the heir-apparent and opposed by the stalwart old-fashioned little Empress Zaiditu, who said to me : " Small I am like Queen Victoria, but great like her I hope to be," by the incredibly retrogressive priesthood who battened on the poverty-ridden ignorant people, and by old-fashioned Ministers or Generals who had begun life as slaves, the future Haile Selassie had attempted to modernize conditions in the towns.

The Princess Menen herself supervised the planting of cotton, the erection of ginning plants, and the weaving of home-grown material. In ideas they were both of them modern, but their difficulty was that they didn't know enough about facts. In spite of his visits to Europe, our predatory continent was—mentally—unknown ground to Haile Selassie. Yet he had wit and a certain amount of dry humour. When I asked him if any of his industrial innovations were likely to pay, he retorted : " Nothing new is ever profitable in this country," adding : " I am making an educational experiment—I want to teach my people the value of industry. At present most of them bury their money or hide it in the roof. Their only idea of investment is to loan their money to anyone who excites their greed by promising high interest."

For my further journey through Abyssinia, the potential Emperor gave me—as well as a couple of excellent stallions on which I rode gaily north, till in the great ranges I had to take to mules—an imposing passport with the imperial

seal ordering my safe conduct to the frontier of Italian Eritrea, a matter of some seven hundred miles, I suppose. But the Emperor's writ was only good for the first few days across the plains. Farther away a series of semi-independent chieftains were quarrelling among themselves.

Europe and Haile Selassie insisted on thinking of Abyssinia as united. But it was never more than a collection of tribal peoples ruled by conquering Christian races, foreign in speech and custom, from the separate kingdoms of Tigre, Shoa, and Amhara. For 'Abyssinia' as idealists envisaged it—an ancient and patriotic country fighting for its 3000-year-old freedom—was a fable, a myth.

In his gallant attempt to unite the old-fashioned and superstitious savages who constituted the mass of his subjects and the few progressive-minded townsfolk who wanted to take everything from, but give nothing to, Europe, the Emperor was hampered by the fact that in the whole country there were perhaps a dozen Abyssinians who thought like himself.

Nearly everyone was against him, especially the countless thousands of priests. I remember the Emperor exclaiming : "The Church stands for freedom, but the clergy for slavery."

II. HAILE SELASSIE FOUGHT FOR A FAIRY-TALE

AT A DINNER SERVED ON GOLD PLATE IN THE PALACE AT ADDIS Ababa, I spoke to His Majesty about the slave trade. The Emperor explained his edict ordering the freeing of all slaves upon the deaths of their masters.

“But the results are not wholly good,” he said, “for outside Addis Ababa there is no hired labour in the country, so all these hundreds of liberated slaves completely ignorant, accustomed only to carrying rifles and running beside their master’s horses, find themselves without any means of earning a living. Brigandage is their sole alternative to starvation.”

Haile Selassie—intelligent, but not well informed, personally courageous, but with no material to organize into an army even if he had been capable of doing so, for he has, I think, no genius for leadership—is, to my mind, fundamentally an Oriental politician. His command of language was typically Eastern. He could express his ideas in a manner sufficiently graphic to make them sound practical. But the problem of Abyssinia was too much for him, as it would be for any but a European exceptionally well trained in native affairs, with force and money at his command.

It seemed to me that the Emperor, disturbed and depressed by the limitation of his authority in the north where life under the almost independent chiefs continued primitive and savage as it had always been, spoke most willingly of the past. He liked to dwell on the administration of his own provinces of which under the late Empress he had been Governor. These he visualized as a huge feudal estate, and in them he had certainly done everything possible with limited means

and no choice of human material. He had tried, above all, to suppress the slave trade and the custom, which had become traditional, of raiding over neighbouring borders. But the south was conquered country and as such, the late Emperor Menelik had distributed it among his generals. These men, or their successors, wished to make as much money as possible while they held office as governors and local administrators. Consequently, Maji, on the Kenya frontier, became a base for slave-raiding into British territory. Beni Shagal was a hot-house for the trade because the villagers, after a season of poor crops, or drought, were only too anxious to sell their children to the Aragouba middle-men who passed on their wares to Arab merchants, familiar with the secret ways across the Dankali deserts. But, in justice to Abyssinia, it must be remembered, that up to the time of the recent war, the slave caravans went out unhampered—through Italian Eritrea—to ports on the Red Sea between Eid and Massawa.

Kafa, once a rich and prosperous province, was reduced by a succession of Amhara governors to a serfdom, under the 'gabar' system, not far removed from slavery. And the same thing occurred all along the southern border where subject tribes, neither Coptic nor Abyssinian, were ruled so severely by their new masters that the various populations began to migrate into Kenya, the Sudan, and Somaliland.

In 1925-26 the old Abouna¹ and the feudal-minded Galla General Hapta Gorgis, died. The Regent and his reformers were left with only the Empress to oppose them, but Zaiditu was stubborn. She supported the governors who were kings in their own provinces. For her a soldiery that made serfs of the peasants and a flourishing internal slave-trade which provided warriors and servants for the great houses were the natural appanages of empire. But Ras Tafari dreamed of a united modern kingdom. Encouraged by his able wife, then

¹ The Black Pope.

the Princess Waizeru Menen, afterwards the Empress, he made an example of an unruly Governor, who, as a favoured eunuch of Menelik the Conqueror, considered himself beyond reach of any more recent authority. There followed a gradual clearing out of all the imperial favourites who had no qualifications for governing except their military prestige, and the substitution of young men trained in the capital who were accustomed to the idea of a central authority.

After two years of such drastic reorganization, the so-called 'Palace Revolt' threatened the whole of the reforms laboriously and patiently instituted by Ras Tafari. But with a remarkable display of courage and a carelessness for his personal safety, which greatly increased his prestige, the young Regent succeeded in quelling what was in effect a rebellion of the primitive and the superstitious against the elements of modern civilization. As a result he was able to assume the executive power, which had hitherto been in the hands of Zaiditu and her feudal advisers. The late Empress ceased to be more than a figurehead, but the great military Rases, Gooksa, Hailu, and others, were still more or less independent in the northern provinces. They paid their own armies, maintained their own customs and issued or refused passports to travellers with the Regent's seal.

In 1930 the Empress Zaiditu died and Ras Tafari, who had so generously received me in Addis Ababa and sent me with every power at his command through the eight hundred miles of ranges which in Simyen, Lasta, and Tigre held up the Italian advance and are still to a great extent unconquered, succeeded her under the title of Haile Selassie.

Shortly afterwards Ras Gooksa, feudal lord of Gondar, whom I had found a generous host, revolted and was crushed. In 1932 the merchant prince of Gojam, Ras Hailu, who received me with a gift of bulls in Debra Markos, rebelled against the new constitution and was immediately deposed.

After his accession, the Emperor had two purposes in view. By limiting the power of the chieftains who for a thousand years and more had looked upon themselves as kings owing scarcely more than lip service to an Emperor remote in the capital, he sought to make a nation out of a loose confederation of races. By granting the constitution of 1931, on the anniversary of his coronation, he attempted still more in the way of modern progress. For, by gathering in the parliament of Addis Ababa representatives of the people from provinces all over the empire, he attacked the first principle of feudalism and made way for the gradual redistribution of power.

Subsequently his idea was to transfer authority from the old governors, ruling by privilege, to the elected representatives of the people and to substitute for the dues paid in kind to local chiefs a system of taxation in money instead of livestock and grain, to be paid direct to the capital. In the same way officials were to receive their salaries from a national treasury instead of from the provincial Rases.

In order to abolish the ' gabar ' system by which a man could pay his dues to the headman or officer commanding the district by en-serfing himself and his family for so many days a month or a year, the Emperor introduced currency reforms and modern banking in which he was assisted by the American financial expert, Mr. Coulson.

At the request of the League of Nations and in continuance of his own policy when he was Governor of Chercher—that delightful hilly province through which I rode on mules and across which Italy's mechanized army advanced to the solitary railway linking Addis Ababa with Harrar and the Red Sea—the Emperor issued an edict freeing all slaves on the death of their masters and making the trade illegal.

"But," repeated the Emperor, "slavery with us was not what you imagine it. The men were brought up to be warriors and when they were suddenly freed they lost all chance of

legitimate fighting. Yet they did not know—and indeed there *was* no other way—of earning their food.” With memories of a thousand-and-eighty-seven-mile journey from south-east to north-west Abyssinia, I could agree that the freed slaves were the most effective brigands from which the country suffered. “There must be a wholly different system of labour throughout the land before we can put an end to slavery,” continued the Emperor and he explained his determination—if he could not at once abolish the domestic slavery which gave food and lodgings to thousands—to strike at the root of the trade by inflicting capital punishment on the stealers and sellers of children. Unfortunately the commerce always depended much more on the willingness of impoverished villagers to sell their children than on those occasional raids into neighbouring or subject countries which in seven years, according to the official records of Kenya and the Sudan, provided no more than sixty-two captives to swell what Italian journalists described as a ‘roaring trade.’

Summarized in a dozen different conversations, the Emperor’s reforms fell into two categories. Taxation was to be collected in money, not in service, and to be paid into a national, not a provincial treasury, thus eliminating the major possibilities of bribery and serfdom. Public security was to be enforced by a police system responsible not to the provincial authorities, as was the case when I rode from end to end of Abyssinia, but to Addis Ababa, from which would have come orders, discipline, and pay.

In order to stop the raiding in search of cattle, water, and an occasional slave, which had from time immemorial been the tradition of tribal Africa, the Emperor instituted a ‘model province’ in Maji, which used to be the forcing house for incidents such as disturbed Italian and British outposts whether it were at Wal-Wal or at any other wells near foreign frontiers. For the last six years of his reign Haile Selassie

had been employing foreign advisers and to a certain extent he had been able to accept their counsels, as in the appointment of new and effective governors who considered themselves officials of the State rather than independent rulers. But until Colonel Sandford was sent to Maji to help the young Zawde Ayelu to put an end to the sort of 'frontier incidents' on which the Italians based their demand for a protectorate over Abyssinia, the foreign advisers remained in the capital where they were an object of suspicion to the 'die-hards,' who resented any interference on the part of Europe.

The Emperor was obliged to introduce his reforms slowly and cautiously, because by far the greater part of his countrymen were opposed to change in any form whatsoever. The average Abyssinian was satisfied with himself and wholly uninterested in foreign affairs, foreign methods or the opinion of those foreigners who crossed his limited horizon. And this applied just as much to the slaves who took their condition for granted and were in no obvious way differentiated from the freemen with whom they ate, drank, fought, and worked, wearing the same clothes, frequenting the same places, and on all occasions mingling on terms fixed by their personalities rather than their circumstances.

Owing to the nature of the country, the Emperor's reforms were more effective in the south, for between Addis Ababa and the frontier of Italian Eritrea lie some seven or eight hundred miles of almost impenetrable mountains.

It was these, as much as the medieval spirit of his people, which delayed Haile Selassie's modern progress. And it is these which made war on Italy.

Talking of war, with bitterness and more understanding of his people's limitations than he would have acknowledged in earlier years, Haile Selassie said: "No Abyssinian wants to know about any other country. He does not even want to know what a foreigner thinks of his own. He has no desire

for education and no consciousness of inferiority. He is content to say 'that is the Habashi way,' and he imagined that 'the Habashi way,' which has not changed since 1896,¹ or, indeed, since 1906, would be equally successful against the Fascists' mechanized army."

"How long will it be," I asked, "before the pace of Abyssinia changes?" I could not imagine the country through which for many months I rode on mule-back, averaging two miles an hour, adapting itself to the modern passion for speed.

"The Abyssinian is never in a hurry," said the Emperor. "Why should he be? What would be the gain? My countrymen are as generous with time as with the hospitality they offer to every traveller."

Abyssinian rule as I saw it had only this one virtue—a personal generosity stretched to the point of charity. No efforts of Haile Selassie, dreaming of European codes, could alter the stubborn structure of his empire. The dominance of his own people, the Amhara, over scores of unwilling and totally different subject races had not bred—or even preserved, if such ever existed—a fine material strain. The Christianity of the Empire had long been perverted by superstition. It was a bastard religion without redeeming qualities. Greed, sickness, poverty, and dirt reigned supreme in the villages. At best one could say of the Abyssinian that he was an engaging rogue. A liar and an amusing story-teller, there were occasions on which he proved himself a good companion and his hospitality was prodigious, but only with the complete reconstruction of his framework of life, possible under European rule, could he approach to being a satisfactory individual judged by any code.

Italy is as yet only at the beginning of the work she has

¹ When it won the battle of Adowa against Italians, out-numbered ten to one.

undertaken. To it she advanced by much the same mountain roads as I followed by Ras Tafari's permission fourteen years ago when they were unknown to Europeans.

Away from the new roads, magnificently built, beyond reach of force, unless it be an aerial raid, there must still exist fragments of village life much as I saw it so long ago. The rogues and the adventurers, the simpletons and the sluts, the merchant gunmen, the drones, and probably the slaves, still live as they have always done in remote recesses among the ranges, but their day is over. What Italy has done for Eritrea—and it has been good work there—she will eventually do for Abyssinia. Not by arms or a display of force, embittering to the surly independence fostered by centuries of alternate idleness, over-eating, and banditry, will she subdue the corrugated mountains, the desert, and the grey waterless bush, so little of which may prove to be worth the labour of cultivation, but by inducing the needs of civilization.

Education and example will advertise soon enough, the comforts and, in this case surely, the benefit to be derived from modern progress. For, strong as were my sympathies with the Abyssinian peasants, unarmed, half-starved, without leadership or united purpose, a people of Genesis fighting a European Power in the forefront of modernity, I realized—and perhaps in the end the Emperor did too—that the independence of a small portion of the country which was never a nation was the only thing of value for which they struggled.

Theirs was no traditional civilization, no pride of race and religious code like the Arabs. They had no qualities or habits which we can honestly mourn, and the half of their empire consisted of provinces brutally enslaved. At best, Abyssinia under her own emperors was no more than a picturesque idea. Christian on the surface, pagan below it, she could never have advanced, never of her own initiative have taken her place in the modern world. A few men she

produced, like her last Emperor, who saw the benefits of an ordered administration based on Western models, but he had no power and no tools to carry out the reforms he visualized. Perhaps his will to do so was not entirely undivided, for in the last analysis, Haile Selassie, dignified, charming, gracious, intelligent, and unwise, was a politician rather than a statesman.

Some of his chieftains proved themselves soldiers. The war was not without its heroism on the part of Abyssinians, but they were fighting for something of doubtful value. Unity and health and an honest Faith, comfort and security, apart from the perhaps questionable benefits of education and commerce, must be worth more than the exceedingly nebulous independence of the subjugated states gathered under the flag of empire. For who among the people I met in imperial Abyssinia was free, or even certain of his life or his property? The Emperor and half a dozen of the ruling chieftains had little to fear except poison, a murderer's knife, treason, or, in the case of the latter, sudden imprisonment on charges as unexpected as they were doubtful, but rich or poor, an official or a peasant had no day's security of tenure.

Not for a moment do I imagine they desired it. No native race enjoys the certainties of good government. Infinitely do they prefer the possibilities of continuous change, the insurrections, upheavals, extortions out of which they may be able to secure some personal advantage.

Civilization, however, may minister to the greed which seemed to me the ruling principle of the Amhara. So, however we may regret the manner in which the last black empire, defender of our own Faith against Islam in the Middle Ages, has come to an end, a more prosperous, a far more healthy, a better governed and in the end, a satisfied and united people may emerge under the ægis of Italy.

To the Emperor, I dared to say that even Britain had first been conquered and then 'gone to school with Rome.' But

Haile Selassie, for all his dignity and his undoubtedly good intentions, has the mind which would always make concessions rather than stand fast on a final issue. He would have used diplomacy if he had not believed foreign force to be at his disposal. He would have given up what reality remained to a three-thousand-year-old tradition and accepted a puppet rule under the direction of Italy. "In this way I could have saved my people much suffering," he said. But he would also have prolonged, mentally as well as physically, a struggle which could have only one end. The book of Genesis cannot compete with the Book of Revelations represented by modern invention.

Flying from the land for which—until the last—he had alternately fought and gambled, His Majesty said to the Captain of H.M. *Enterprise*, with whom I subsequently lunched: "England has betrayed me." Later, in London, he said: "Had I only known that England would not fight I need never have lost my country. I could have made terms with Italy." He also said: "I thought of the League of Nations as a number of all-powerful European Ministers talking familiarly round a table and between them arranging peace."

His Majesty was as dignified in the London house where he stayed, as in his palace 6000 feet up on Mount Entoto. Authority is in his blood. Exile could make no difference to his natural royalty. But he was still as far from understanding the muddled compromises of post-war diplomacy. "When I heard the British Fleet had passed Gibraltar I thought we were saved," he said.

"Perhaps England and Abyssinia were equally misinformed," I suggested. "Each thought the other would fight to the death."

"I had nothing with which to fight," he said. The truth is that he had nothing *for* which to fight. The Abyssinian Empire was as much a fairy-tale as its Emperor's idea of the League of Nations.

NINETEEN



*TRIBUTE TO
FIELD-MARSHAL MANNERHEIM*

TRIBUTE TO FIELD-MARSHAL MANNERHEIM

FINLAND'S WHITE ARMY IS LED BY THE BEST-LOOKING MAN in Europe. Field-Marshal Baron Gustav Mannerheim is over seventy years old, but my first impression—when I met him at the British Legation in Helsinki—was, 'What a splendid-looking man !'

The Minister's wife had telephoned to my hotel: "You **MUST** come to lunch. You'll meet the last of the Vikings."

"I've no clothes," I retorted, "and I don't know that I'll have time between baths." I had just arrived from Russia and was determined, after grim weeks without hot water, to make the most of all that Finnish plumbing offered.

"Nonsense," retorted the hospitable voice. "You **must** need feeding up! I've ordered extra helpings for you—and besides, it's Mannerheim!"

I couldn't resist a talk with the only man who has effectively said 'No' to Russia. So, in a dilapidated tweed which had served me well between the Volga and the Ukraine, I arrived at the Legation, prepared to feel out of place.

But the Field-Marshal asked a great many questions about Russia, showing, of course, how well he already knew the country, and soon we were discussing the possibility of 'war in any direction.'

"Finland," said a Banker, "is something of a Naboth's vineyard. Russia is always terrified that she'll be attacked via the Baltic, so she'd like to hold both sides of our gulf."

"I doubt if she'd make war to get them——" began a Minister.

"Why not?" retorted a Frenchman. "She needs advanced air and sea bases. Helsinki and Reval would make excellent sentries at the gates of Leningrad."

The Field-Marshal, who had already fought one successful war against Russia, said: "The Soviet will probably try to achieve those sentry-boxes you talk about, by guile or—if propaganda fails—by direct negotiations. Of course, if we once give them a foothold inside our country, it is finished! They'll remember Norway's useful ports and Sweden's ore. We are the last barrier. If Russia breaks us, she will go farther." He added: "Our frontier is the strongest in the north. If we're ever put to it to hold the Mannerheim line against the Soviet, we shall be fighting for all our civilized neighbours as well as ourselves. Once through Finland there would be little chance of stopping a Red Army except on the shores of the North Sea."

"Do you think the Russians have got a good army?" I asked, and I told of the enormous and effective parades I had seen.

"They have got excellent fighting material," said the Finnish Marshal, "if they know how to use it—which I doubt."

This conversation took place several years ago, but the Field-Marshal's summing-up of the situation has proved correct. Sitting straight but not stiff in an arm-chair, his strong, deeply lined face full in the light, his eyes, a little narrowed under carved lids, looking out of the window to the water and the melting snow, he said: "The Russian soldier is a good fighter if he has any chance at all. He can endure almost as much as a Chinese. But the Kremlin never gives any man a chance. In case of invasion, I imagine we could count on most of the senior Russian officers being disgraced or

'eliminated' before they had time to be effective. I hear the Soviet's first-line troops are good enough, but the rest are ill-trained and without sufficient equipment. Of course, numbers are sometimes sufficient to make up for lack of everything else, but it is horrible to visualize a war in which Russia would—literally—make use of bodies instead of organization, ammunition, and strategy."

I longed to ask: "Could she succeed just with bodies?" but it sounded too crude. So I said: "The people in Russia would not want to fight at all."

The Field-Marshall replied: "In these days when life for the majority is comfortable and full of pleasant opportunity, I doubt if any people ever want to fight a war of aggression. It is much too inconvenient for them. It upsets their daily lives, and their wives object!" The Field-Marshall smiled. He has the face of a typical soldier, clear-cut and quiet. There is nothing indefinite about him. He expresses himself clearly, using words as good tools which he respects. "Ten miles from our frontiers, most of the villagers are as ignorant of our life as of Buddhism in Central Asia. They are told we are starving and that our factories and shops are closed. They probably imagine we should welcome a Red invasion," continued the Finn. "Dealing with Russia as a people is impossible, because nothing gets through to the ordinary man. With the utmost sincerity he believes in a world which does not exist at all. If a company of Russian soldiers could be dropped suddenly into the middle of one of our prosperous country towns, they would probably be too surprised to fight. They would set about eating instead."

I told the Field-Marshall of the greed which travellers from Leningrad displayed the instant they crossed the frontier. "We all made a rush for the milk and the stuffed rolls! I've never eaten so much in my life. Even the waitress hesitated to bring me more cream. In Russia everything

tastes the same : meat, fish, and vegetables. It was heavenly enjoying food again after weeks of just stoking."

The Field-Marshal laughed and offered me the cheese biscuits. "Don't waste a moment," he said.

How little we all thought then—in that warm pastel-coloured room, with the first spring flowers in bowls of incomparable Swedish glass—that Mannerheim would so soon be fighting for the whole of Europe on the one thin line that separates civilization against savagery.

"What a magnificent man!" said one of the guests as the Finn took his leave, after inviting me to see his house on the sea. Everybody agreed. "He's unique," said the Minister.

Indeed there is no more splendid figure in world history to-day, and no greater soldier. For Mannerheim's feats are those of a youth—one of his own ghostly riflemen invisible in white uniform and white-fur cap, with skis on his feet, swift as a cloud shadow, deadly as forked lightning, fighting alone against a blundering Red battalion. He is younger even than the schoolboys who stormed to his doors demanding to fight for Finland. "We've learned enough!" they said. "We're men"—at fifteen and sixteen. "We must fight for our freedom."

For nothing defeats the Finnish leader. His is the brilliant strategy of the present war. He has the whole Front in his brain, and every one of his countrymen behind him. His was the genius which built the line of fortifications called after him and his the tactics which, with barely half a million men at his disposal—but each of them trained as an intelligent individual—hold back the invasion of barbarians.

For Russia's hordes, driving unarmed Polish prisoners in front of them as a shield against an enemy outnumbered thirty to one, have no more claim to civilization than murderous blacks descending on a white homestead in Africa. This is

the second time that Mannerheim has fought the same war, for, in January 1918, he was called upon to lead his country against the Russia of Lenin, slowly struggling out of the chaos of revolution.

During the last century, a great many Finns, including young Mannerheim, had served in the Imperial Army, for, in those days, Russia respected the autonomy decreed to Finland by the Czar Alexander I. At the beginning of our own era, the policy of St. Petersburg changed and repressive measures were taken against the nationalists in Finland. As a result Liberationists began to evolve a definite organization, and two thousand young Finns escaped to Germany, where they contrived sufficient military training to be able to fight for their freedom. It was they who, in 1918, formed the hard core of Mannerheim's army.

The Bolshevik revolution in November 1917 had freed Germany on the eastern front. She was no longer interested in helping Finnish patriots to create a diversion farther north. So Mannerheim began his incredible campaign without the supplies for which he had hoped. His first attacks in Ostrobothnia were made with untrained peasants. They had not anything like enough rifles, but they attacked and defeated the Russian regular troops, holding fortified positions. It is possible that some of these, turned suddenly from white to red, were chiefly interested in getting back to the re-named Russian cities in order to see what was happening at home. But, unfortunately, in three months of Leninism—the new religion which was to make a new earth and render heaven altogether superfluous—they had managed to impress the simple and uneducated Finnish peasants who had been their companions on the frontier, with the material advantages offered by their doctrine, 'The land for the people! The factories for the workers!'—and money off the hedges, of course, or from the coffers of the conveniently dead! It

sounded quite easy. So some of the border Finns joined the Reds and what should have been a nationalist rising acquired certain aspects of civil war. The Finns deluded by Russia fought as well as their patriotic countrymen, but Mannerheim did not give them much time.

A General of Imperial Russia, who had fought in every possible campaign, from the Japanese to the Polish, Roumanian and Galician fronts, he was accustomed to war. Already he was something of a legend. When he decided to cut all communications between Russia and Finland across the comparatively flat Karelian isthmus, townsfolk and villagers turned themselves into soldiers. The mighty Red steam-roller of Bolshevik Russia was against them. It might be hesitating as to its direction, but it was still a force. The Red Guard fought without mercy. In those days General Mannerheim had to pit an unarmed country, scarcely yet a nation, against a vast foreign army which had already occupied the best positions in Eastern Finland. In April 1918 his peasants and his factory workers, his Civil Guard turning themselves heroically into regular troops, won their first victory when the strongly fortified city of Tampere fell after three weeks' fury of attack. In some incredible fashion, Mannerheim apparently conjured arms out of the air. He made good soldiers out of lads giving up their first wages to fight for independence. He led them against sixty-five thousand Reds, and in spite of a serious shortage of munitions, he snatched victory after victory from a startled, indeed an unbelieving, Russia. Vilipuri, a fortress guarding communications with Petrograd, fell to a particularly daring attack. In the same month of April, with the first melting of the snows, the Bolshevik forces began to give way. A frontier stronghold surrendered to a force not more than a quarter the strength of its own garrison. On 16 May 1918, while we were still fighting Germany, Mannerheim led his victorious peasants,

many of them still without uniforms, into Helsinki. Finland was free !

By the subsequent peace treaty, Lenin himself guaranteed all that the 'White General' in his white furs had won. With iron will, with indomitable courage, and with such genius for attack that legends grew about his supposed appearances in a dozen different places at the same time—all under fire—Mannerheim gained not only his country's independence, but an honoured place for her among Western nations.

In view of the Soviet's attack on their small neighbour to-day, it must be remembered that the founder of Bolshevism the saint and prophet who lies buried under red marble in a glow of red light beside the Kremlin in Moscow, Lenin, who loved and honoured freedom, who dreamed of a free workers' world utterly unlike the Russia of to-day—*solemnly acknowledged the independence and territorial integrity of Finland*. So Stalin the disciple is denying the creed of his own prophet. Even to their own peculiar faith the Bolsheviks are not true !

For a short time the Finland of 1918 leaned to Germany. Her heroic Jaeger battalion, the two thousand young men who had found a secret way through Sweden and Germany, had been trained under the Kaiser's officers. The Allies failed to supply ammunition. Germany succeeded in doing so. It was natural that Finland, battered by the Russia which had begun the Great War as our ally, should choose a German prince, brother-in-law of the Kaiser, as prospective king. But General Mannerheim, elected head of his country, opposed this policy with all his strength. "The Allies will win," he said and repeated it through the terrible months when, to the less far-sighted, our fate seemed in the balance. He knew that Finns and British have one vital quality in common. They fight best against odds.

It was General Mannerheim, subsequently Field-Marshal

and permanent Commander-in-Chief of the famous Civic Guard, which saved the country in 1918 and is performing miracles in the far-flung front line to-day, who reversed the Government policy. As Regent and 'Holder of the Supreme Power,' he prevailed upon Prince Friedrich Karl to give up his hopes of the Finnish Throne. Subsequently, after visits to London and Paris, the White General succeeded in getting the foodstuffs and other supplies his land so desperately needed. He brought order, peace, and a solid friendship between all classes to his countrymen before he ceded the government to a professor who had also played a brave part in the War of Independence.

Since then, the grandest patriot in Europe has lived 'privately,' except that every national function demanded his presence, every national organization his help. For twenty years of peace Finland, keeping her treaties, paying to the last farthing her debts, building up her industrial prosperity, cultivating the best farms in the north, has been a bulwark of peace in the Baltic and the friendliest of neighbours to Russia as well as to Norway and Sweden.

The Field-Marshal has visited England every autumn. A fine shot, he has travelled through that mysterious and independent country of Nepal, a sovereign state forbidden to ordinary Indian tourists. There, his bag of tigers included four shot from the backs of hunting elephants. And this is no easy achievement, for only a female elephant will—sometimes—stand firm in the face of a charging tiger. The male nearly always stampedes.

At home the Field-Marshal rides every day. In summer he swims before breakfast. In winter he is a tireless ski-er. If ever a man has conquered age, it is Finland's defender. Over seventy, and still a polo-player, he does not limit his interests to outdoor sports, for he is a great lover of music. He hears every opera, even the most modern, and attends in London as

well as in Helsinki, all the most interesting concerts. He is a mighty speaker and can hold an audience spellbound. But he reads far more than he talks. Every morning in his square white house looking over the sea and the jewelled beauty of the islands which Finland defends with her life-blood, he used to study French, English, American, and Swiss papers, as well as the Scandinavian Press. So he is one of the best-informed statesmen in Europe.

His house shows his tastes. Many walls are lined with books in different languages. On the polished floors among beautiful Eastern rugs, lie his huge striped tiger-skins. On white walls hang the battle-flags of Finland and some of the pennons belonging to the ancient houses of the north, such as you see in the 'Hall of the Nobles,' one of the stateliest buildings in Helsinki. To me the most interesting thing in that house by the sea is the collection of Buddhas—great gilt images of the 'Lord of Peace,' brought by the Field-Marshal from monasteries among the glaciers of Central Asia. Their solemn, slanted eyes, their slender fingers raised in prayer, watch now and guard the last great exploit, the final adventures of Finland's crusader. But never did Richard the Lion Heart or the sainted Louis XI of France—fighting for the Cross against a savagery far surpassed by Soviet Russia to-day—struggle against such odds!

Once again civilization in the north depends on Finnish courage. It depends on the Mannerheim Line, last fortification against the tyranny which spreads from Moscow to Berlin. Every man and boy between Beautiful Helsinki and the Arctic has asked of their national hero another miracle. Help us, they demand, with less than half a million, backed by a few unarmed peasants, old men and schoolboys, to hold the Red Army which can put fifteen million in the field. If it can be done—and at what cost to the ONLY small country in Europe which has stood up to overwhelming Russia, except

Belgium, bravely voting for Soviet expulsion from the League of Nations—Mannerheim will do it.

With him are the prayers of every free spirit in Britain. There is not an independent Britisher who would not like to be fighting beside him.

TWENTY



*SOUTH AFRICA'S
GENERAL SMUTS*

SOUTH AFRICA'S GENERAL SMUTS

“TAKE CARE NOT TO LET HIM GET YOU OUT OF THE HOUSE, or he'll walk you into the day after to-morrow!” The Bishop of Pretoria's warning was repeated by a dim and charming person belonging to the Oxford Group. I have forgotten his name. He said: “Table Mountain is a symbol to most of us, but General Smuts takes it in his stride. Whenever he sees it, he climbs it as a matter of course. He does it between meals as a natural exercise. Be careful not to start on a walk with him.”

Amused at these indirect descriptions of Africa's irritant, genius, whipping-boy and inspiration, I asked: “But what is he like—tell me.”

A farmer replied: “He's ‘slim.’ You won't get away with anything. He'll turn you inside out, pick you to pieces, and make use of whichever bits are most useful to him. Oh, yes, he's a great man.” The speaker, who loved politics and his gun and the sight of good pedigree cattle providing they did not belong to his treasured enemy and nearest neighbour, spoke with pride. Smuts belonged to him. The General's qualities whether of understanding or cunning were a possession which he shared with all the other dwellers on the veldt. He might be disturbed by so much knowledge of Europe and international affairs in the brain of a man who could express with ease what he thought—or even more than he thought—but his distrust was tempered by admiration. He could not imagine South Africa without its bewildering General.

A young townsman said to me: "He is our biggest chance of being a real Union, because he can get hold of any man he wants."

The captain of a tramp-steamer said: "He's got pluck. That's what I like—pluck. If he gets his teeth into a thing, he'll never let go. But he's not too comfortable to live with. You feel he knows too much about you."

After all this it was with the greatest interest that I drove from Pretoria on a clear, colourless afternoon to spend a few hours on the Minister's farm. I remember a dusty lane leading from the high road and willows bent by the prevailing wind. The house was small, comfortable, and stocky like a village cob. There were wide, wooden verandas and a variety of homely objects heaped in unexpected places. A hen sat on a rail and looked at us.

The General was feeling cold. He had been reading a new book about the last war, so it had not occurred to him to eat or to move his chair out of a draught. I imagine he had just stretched out a groping hand, picked up anything it touched, and huddled it round his shoulders. He came out with what I thought was intended for a table-cloth wound about him, but it would never matter what Smuts wore. He is so definitely a person that in a railway waiting-room chaotic with traffic, you would have to be aware of him. He has a quite extraordinary charm and a remarkable facility of expression. No wonder the dour and cautious farmers on the back veldt are frightened of being involved in something too big for them by the tidal force of Smut's beliefs. There is nothing the man cannot do with words. He said to me at once: "You are a great surprise and a pleasure. I expected a different kind of woman. I've read a lot of your books and now I see that you write like you smile." The compliment was put more simply than Bernard Shaw's "I used to think you were a wonderful woman—getting to all these places.

But now I've seen you I realize it must have been quite easy for you."¹

General Smuts gave me the impression of being gay, neat—in spite of his open shirt and dusty flannel trousers faded to the colour of the veldt—shrewd, and intuitive to the last degree, a law unto himself and, above all things, free. Most of us think we are free when we can shut our own front doors against the world, but for Smuts freedom means old clothes on the veldt and a tireless tramp with nobody in sight and his head full of ideas. He must surely have some Irish blood tucked away somewhere! For he has all the wit and the sympathy of Ireland with that devastating habit of being able to make exactly what he likes out of words. He has a prodigious memory. It is a filing-cabinet for everything he has ever heard or read. The walls of his farm-house are lined with books. From the floor to ceiling, even in the passages they are ranged with the precision of an army in training, but it is an army which has seen battle. For Smuts knows all his books. They are his familiar friends. "Take any one you like," he told me. "Open it wherever you choose, read me a paragraph, and I'll tell you what comes next." It seemed an impossible feat, but the General accomplished it. In turn I read extracts from Ludwig, Dostoievsky, Engelenburg's *General Botha*, Winston Churchill, Sacha Guitry, and the letters of Woodrow Wilson. With few exceptions, my host could quote the exact words which followed. He always knew the sense of the next paragraph. "It's dangerous," I commented, "to have such a good memory. If you can forget nothing at all, you take pain with you all your life." Smuts said: "I don't feel that sort of pain. You learn from the people who fail you not from those who stick to you."

We had tea in a whitewashed room with two large tables

¹ Said to me by G.B.S., at a dinner-party given by the late Sir Henry Norman for the then American Ambassador.

taking up most of the place left by books and the possessions of grandchildren. Mrs. Smuts was a small, friendly figure in a dark blouse and skirt. She said she did not like wearing shoes in the house, and she moved with the ease and strength of carriage of those unaccustomed to high heels or whalebone. Her eyes followed her husband. She spoke of him as the 'old master.' She seemed to me staunch, quiet, kind, but with a strong will and a quick temper hidden away. I thought she must be just the right wife for the General, who is now Prime Minister. I could not imagine her flustered. Out of her pride she would be reassuring. She would also be practical and quite capable of pricking with cool, sound sense any exaggerated imaginativeness. She told the Bishop's wife how the 'oo' baas¹ had given her an evening coat to wear in Pretoria. It was velvet and very fine. He had chosen well, for he had good taste and he knew what women ought to wear, but for her own part she was not interested in clothes or parties. She liked living on the farm. She liked house-keeping and cooking and children. But best of all, I suppose, she liked looking after her husband. I could well imagine her, a sturdy, determined little figure in inconspicuous colours, following with quiet persistence through the drawing-rooms of official Pretoria—unmoved by compliments or criticism—the quick, elusive movements of her husband.

There was a certain amount of mystery about that tea-party on the General's farm. Mrs. Smuts whispered in the ear of the Bishop's wife. In the middle of excellent cakes, home-made, our hostess could resist temptation no longer. She wanted to show off her husband's latest gift. We followed her down a passage. She opened a door and revealed some excellent modern plumbing—the first in the house. "The plug pulls. Try it," she said. And then with a sigh: "But the 'oo' baas' doesn't like these new inventions. He prefers the

¹ The old master.

veldt, and it is too cold, much too cold, for him in winter."

We went back to the dining-room, and Smuts talked with ease and knowledge of politics and political treaties. He was a clever judge of men, and found the right phrase for each of his colleagues in the last war. Lloyd George he described as "dynamite, but an uncertain charge," Arthur Balfour as "a competent idealist"—which reminded me of a long argument I had with the latter on a journey to Paris in 1919. At the end of it, forced to acknowledge that a Zionist state in Palestine was, to say the least of it, unpractical, Mr. Balfour sighed and murmured: "Well, you must acknowledge it's a delightfully poetic idea!"

General Smuts seems elderly, and even on occasions a trifle crumpled, with his sparse hair, deep-scarred lines and the sun- or wind-crinkles at the corners of his lids—until you look straight into his eyes. Then you get a shock. For they are fiercely blue, indomitable and young. There—at last—is the right word for Smuts. I have been searching for it while I write. He is, above all things, indomitable. Like everybody endowed with charm—the Queen, the Duke of Windsor, Roosevelt, Ellen Terry, Doumergue once President of France, the late Queens of Belgium and Roumania, Chaplin, Eden, Gracie Fields, and Italy's last Ambassador in London, Count Grandi, who could do exactly what he liked with anybody from Cabinet Ministers to railway-porters—Smuts makes good and sensible use of a natural gift. Why should he not? Charm makes life much easier for most of its possessors, but there are some dwellers in isolated corners of the back veldt who are as suspicious of charm as they are of machinery and wireless, modern domestic convenience, mass production, and a free Press!

The Union is a force in Africa, and in the Empire, but very young as a nation, although she has been tested in many fires.

“I fought against you in 1900. I fought for you in 1914. I always supposed I should fire my last shot in the service of a South African Republic, but if England is ever attacked, I shall send my last son to defend her.” This is what a Dutch-speaking South African doctor-farmer in the Transvaal said to me two years ago. He lived in a small wooden house surrounded by orange trees. A row of hard chairs was ranged round the living-room walls under photographs of the mounted Boer *commandos* with whom my host had fought at the beginning of the century.

Through an open door I could see the big wooden double bed behind the cooking-stove. There were texts in Afrikaans, the national tongue of the Union, above my head and on a beautifully polished table the great treasure of the house, a Bible which had belonged to President Krueger.

My host had lost a trigger-finger when defending his home-stead against a British company deployed behind his own hayricks. He had acquired a stiff leg from a bullet wound on the Western Front, where the South African Volunteer brigade held Delville Wood for six days and five nights against overwhelming attack. Five thousand men went into those trenches and only a handful came out.

This twisted, elderly Afrikander, hospitably offering coffee and delicious rich Dutch cakes, explained that he looked upon Holland as his mother. For his ancestors came from that stalwart, independent, and hard-working country whose Queen, Wilhelmina, sent a warship to the rescue of the Boer President, Krueger, after his three years' struggle to defend his people and his homeland against the whole might of Britain. “The Union is my child,” continued the Afrikander, who could think generously of the world in which he had fought one war in self-defence (1900) and a second on behalf of his former enemies (1914). “England,” he added with a twinkle, “well, England, I suppose, I regard as a wife. You know

how difficult and unreasonable a wife can be, but she must always be protected ! ” The attitude of this charming old man, who had read a great deal more than most of his neighbours on the back veldt, where the farms are sometimes separated by two or three days’ journey on horseback or by ox-wagon, and who thoroughly enjoyed politics, treating them as prime sport, is conducive to an understanding of South Africa to-day. To realize how grand a part the Union plays under General Smuts, we must go back to the Boer War. All nations, and certainly all empires, are bound to make mistakes. That war against which the wise old Queen Victoria used the whole of her influence in vain, was the worst of our errors. We fought it with great individual heroism in order to control the inexhaustible gold of the Rand.

The Boers, a pitiful handful of farmers and townsfolk untrained as soldiers, fought it to the last breath in their bodies, to defend the lands they had tilled and the homes they had built. To our credit as a people, it must be acknowledged that after we had won the war British imperialists gave back to South Africa, as quickly and thoroughly as possible, all the gains of victory. Since then the Union has ruled herself as a free dominion, voluntarily within the British Empire. But it is natural that year after year she should play with the idea of a republic.

Her farmers from the high veldt and the low, the bush veldt, the sweet and sour and back veldts, motoring cheerfully through fifty or sixty miles of deep sand, or scrub tenanted by wild ostrich, to attend a political meeting instead of a league football match, her townsmen, exceedingly well-educated in home affairs but often ignorant of Europe, know that it is not practical politics. The republic to them is a sort of final adventure, one that is most unlikely to happen, and that would be startlingly difficult to cope with if it did turn suddenly into a reality !

"Even if we were a republic, we could choose our own friends, and we should certainly still regard England as the best of them," said a South African minister who had been wounded in the Boer War. From memories of that mistaken war has grown the political fire-balloon of South African republicanism. To it may be attributed also the apparently reactionary attitude of Dr. Malan. He is a pastor and leader of the nationalist party, and would quite frankly put the clock back to the isolationist policy of the Voortrekkers. Those gallant, obstinate Dutch-speaking farmers trekking north with their families and household goods, preferred exile and lonely, independent poverty to mixing with the new immigrants and sharing their prosperity. According to his public and private speeches, Dr. Malan visualizes a South Africa steeped in the Book of Isaiah, with an Afrikaans-speaking people completely cut off from the rest of the world, and the six and a half million blacks (Kaffirs) as serfs in a patriarchal system ignorant of and indifferent to all other countries.

But that old war between Briton and Boer, both equally heroic, produced for South Africa her two great figures of to-day. General Smuts and General Hertzog both fought against us from 1899 to 1902. Neither can have forgotten that long-drawn-out and agonized attempt to save their people from foreign dominion. But General Smuts is so big a man that he is content to have achieved South African freedom by political agreement with Great Britain, and is now eager that his own country shall play a great part within the empire which ensures its security and commercial prosperity.

General Hertzog, less travelled, less internationally-minded, wishes to consolidate the Union of Afrikaans and English-speaking peoples which is the essential South Africa to-day, not in narrow, retrogressive isolation after the manner of Dr. Malan, but as a self-sufficient nation concerned only with defence. Both these men have many enemies as well as a multi-

tude of friends in the Union. Both are strong characters, ruthless when it is necessary. General Hertzog, intensely patriotic, honest and sincere, with comparatively little knowledge of Europe, or the far-reaching threats of Hitlerism, sees no reason why his distant land, guardian of the world's greatest wealth of gold and of the peace of half a continent, vulnerable on all sides, should intervene 'on behalf of Poland,' already annihilated. With German blood in his veins kin to the irreproachable German farmers who have done well in agriculture and stock-raising in the Union, and are highly respected by their neighbours, he still thinks of Germany as the friendly, hospitable country of science and music and the beer-halls before Hitler turned it into an arsenal and a concentration-camp.

But even in his 'South-Africa-must-be-concerned-only-with-South-Africa' speeches, General Hertzog makes no difference between his English- and Dutch (Afrikaans)-speaking fellow-countrymen. He includes the modern young British farmers of Natal, breeding polo ponies, the pedigree stock raisers of the Transvaal, growing peaches and monkey-nuts as side-lines, shooting snakes as vermin, treating their native labour as children, with the occasional timely help of the local witch-doctor (who divines a thief by the throwing of bones out of his leopard-skin pouch), the triple-languaged townsmen—orators born to political argument—the engineers and railwaymen and pilots who know a bigger Africa, and the last of the old Voortrekker stock whose homesteads, built each in the farthest corner of the family acres, may have neither bath, mirror, nor plumbing.

If Holland were invaded I imagine all General Hertzog's followers, ninety-five per cent of whom are probably of Dutch extraction, would ache to fight with the 'realists.' Those supporting General Smuts realize that Hitler does not only want European dominion but also German West Africa,

Johannesburg's gold, and the best of neighbouring East Africa as well. In one thing all the Union is united. No man would give back the South-West to the Nazis. Their regime immediately broke the peace of that mandated land, where, until 1934, German farmers had been content to take Union (South African) nationality and work with their neighbours of Dutch and English origin for the good of half a continent. With the first Nazi settlers came intrigues, riots, interference with individual rights, and the usual madness of politics.

It is General Smuts who sees how the unity, security, and prosperity of both South and West Africa can only be achieved by supporting the Empire in its hour of desperate need. "If we leave England alone now," he repeats, "she will have every right to leave us alone should we be threatened by an enemy power."

But I think this amazing man, who has travelled over much of the world, who has lived in England, and who fought the 1914-1918 war from Whitehall exchanging the saddle of a Boer *commando* leader for a seat in the Imperial War Cabinet, has a warm feeling for England, the 'interfering wife,' no doubt, but a parent quick in defence. He once said to me: "The only flag in the world which has never been lowered is the White Ensign."

Wrinkled, hardy as the best leather, the Smuts of to-day is a combination of several other 'Jan Christians'—the Boer general of thirty, so desperate that with rifles and his friend, Denys Reitz, he stalked in magnificent defiance a British warship anchored within range of some sand-dunes; the John the Baptist of Lloyd George, sent to prepare the way for peace among Irish Americans, Jews, Belgians, and, incidentally, the imperialists of Versailles; as one of the six members of the 1917 War Cabinet and later as a dissentient voice at Versailles.

“From the beginning,” says the Smuts of to-day, “I knew that Versailles was wrong.” He seems to have evaded the influence of President Wilson. He was also much less tired and depressed than the other frontier-hagglers, scrapping economic necessity for ethnographical frontiers which were a combination of the illogical and the ideal. ‘I have signed the Peace Treaty,’ he wrote, ‘not because I consider it a satisfactory document but because it is imperatively necessary to close the war.’ He added: ‘The real work of making peace will only begin after this treaty has been signed.’

All these diverse activities have gone to the making of South Africa’s leader. He was once described—by Lord Fisher, I think—as “Napoleonic in audacity, Cromwellian in thoroughness, and Nelsonic in execution.”

He has, to my mind, simpler qualities. He says: “Failure and success, being great and being very small indeed, have all fitted into the pattern of my life.” With patience, perhaps with some amusement, he has listened for years to his parliamentary opponents making capital not only out of his alleged mistakes but out of his unyielding personality. Then—with the same patience—he has got back to the veldt and travelled from dorp to dorp in an open roadster, on horseback, sometimes on a wagon, to explain to his own followers and to all the others who enjoy political speeches, what has been done in the last session. He also tells them about Europe and the folly of burning back the high grass, and what he thinks of the harvest or the last Kaffir problem, if there happens to be one. Everybody asks questions about war and native labour and peanuts, about his botany-stick and his grass-press, about the Book of Isaiah and fruit-planting and the best yokes for travelling oxen, about Hitler and West Africa, and witch-doctors and snakeskin for teamsters’ whips, about anything, in fact, which comes into their heads. They ask more of him than any other people or any other country have ever asked of

their leaders. For he is more than a South African. Even when they doubt or disbelieve, even when they hate or fear, they know that he fights, and has always fought, for what he believes is freedom. And this is the very core and essence of the Union.

It is right that such a man, indescribable because his brain is multiple edged, fearless, forceful on occasion to the pitch of violence, aggressive when necessary, should lead his country to-day. He is the problem, the idol, and the terror of that country. But he is one of the few who completely understands her difficulties and her position in the world of to-day or to-morrow.

“South Africa has got a hard job,” he says, “but she’ll see it through.” In the last war the Union had first to quell a rebellion when twenty to thirty thousand of her own people revolted against her participation in ‘a foreign campaign.’ Subsequently she had to conquer German West Africa. On another frontier she waged the long East African campaign against that genius and hero, the German Robin Hood, General von Lettow Vorbeck, who, for years, took all his ammunition, material, and even uniforms from the unfortunate Portuguese, or by unexpected lightning raids, when he always went faster and farther than anyone imagined possible. To-day General Smuts has an equally hard task. For he and his party, which is daily gaining strength, have made themselves responsible for the defence of all British South and East Africa. They have promised, if necessary, to go to the rescue of far off Kenya which, at the outbreak of war, sent every available man to the northern desert in case of Italian attack from Abyssinia. They are also pledged to assist the stalwart and intensely patriotic Rhodesians, working all out to increase their vital copper output to 105 per cent. Lonely little Portuguese East Africa, the possession of our oldest and most faithful ally, looks to the Union for help in case of emergency. Besides all

this, she has to keep peace in the mandated south west, where Nazi intrigue is rife. When I was last there contraband rifles were being smuggled across the frontier of neighbouring Angola, and secret seditious societies were working full time, in spite of the protests of sensible, hard working farmers of several nationalities.

The Union has the second most important of our imperial sea routes to defend. She is responsible for the land defences of Simonstown, the empire's great naval base guarding the Cape route to Australia and the East. Working overtime, she has succeeded in fortifying Table Bay harbour until that essential imperial asset is proof against any but the heaviest attacks from sea and air. As a result, Capetown will have some effective surprises for the wandering German pocket battleships, *Deutschland* and *Admiral Scheer*, if they try to repeat the exploits of the *Emden*, which, in 1914, slipped into Madras harbour and set all the oil-tanks on fire.

South Africa is in a far more difficult position than Canada, Australia, or New Zealand with their white population of European blood. The Union has only two million whites among three times as many blacks and coloured people. The six and a half million Kaffirs who have to be looked after like children, are, for the most part extremely primitive. General Smuts and South Africa are not content with speeding up production, so that the gold and raw materials we urgently need will flow fast and plentiful into our war chests, with being the guardian of peace between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific and the protector of the largest native population in Africa, with the maintenance of sea, air, and land routes essential to our supplies and the movement of our forces. The ambitious five-year recruiting and training plan, instituted in 1934, is being implemented to the full. Long before we started to arm in self-defence, South Africa had seen the danger. The original rearmament plan was speeded up in

1936 and a further impetus given in 1938. Now the Union is at work in order to fight.

Colonel Reitz sums up the feeling of his proud, brave, independent land by saying : "Let me assure you on behalf of General Smuts, our great leader, and on behalf of the Union Government, that South Africa will do what South Africans have ever done in the past. They will fight for liberty side by side with all those who wish to be free."

TWENTY-ONE



*MAHATMA GANDHI
AND THE UNITY OF
INDIA*

MAHATMA GANDHI AND THE UNITY OF INDIA

“ HOW WOULD FREEDOM SERVE US IF ENGLAND AND FRANCE fall ? ” In these words, Mahatma Gandhi is reported to have expressed his conviction that India should not use the present war as a means of bargaining with Britain. While the Left-wing politicians, hating Nazi Germany and disillusioned by Russia, whom they accuse of changing in a few weeks from Communism to Imperialism would force Britain to expedite the promised settlement on the basis of Dominion status, Gandhi is capable of broader vision.

“ I cannot think of Indian independence alone——” he says.

Yet he has always been a fanatic on the subject of every country’s right to rule or misrule itself. “ When we are free we shall not need to fight,” he said, seated on the floor of his sitting-room in Knightsbridge. I had asked him how he thought he could defend the frontiers of his country should the British forces be withdrawn. Looking like a large and rather ruffled white bird, with his enormous spectacles pushed a little forward on his nose, the Mahatma continued to eat celery while he talked.

“ If India is ever free she will have to fight united and determined not only against her hereditary enemies across the North-West Frontier,” I insisted, “ but also in the causes of agriculture, health, industry, education——”

Gandhi was unimpressed. In his *dhoti*, scrupulously white, but out of keeping with the greyness of a wet London evening, he sat crouched against a colourless wall. I had come to see

him on the introduction of Indian friends because of a conversation with a young Rajput prince. Finding myself next to this exceedingly modern and intelligent youth at a London dinner-party I asked him what he thought about the Mahatma. "Tell me what he's really like," I said.

The ruler of a kingdom approximating to the size of Wales hesitated. Then with his Oxford accent he replied: "That is too difficult. What would you say if I asked you to describe Christ?"

Later on whenever I heard the Indian leader criticized or denounced as a self-seeking politician I remembered the young prince's description, and I determined to see the man who wants to put the clock back to the Book of Genesis. When I first met him in the rather dingy sitting-room in Knightsbridge, where he ought to have caught cold because doors were always open and a howling draught beat upon his scarcely covered back, I was bitterly disappointed. Certain personalities are impressive whatever their background. In a station waiting-room one would be conscious of Roosevelt's vitality or Neville Chamberlain's intense sincerity, but when I left Gandhi that first time I had only a vague memory of what he looked like, and he seemed to me as out of touch with modern conditions as an apostle of two-thousand-years-ago Judæa transported to the London traffic lights and motor-buses. I was wrong, of course, for Gandhi has considerable political ability. But he is at least two men.

He really does believe in his fasts. To him they are important spiritual weapons as likely to be effective as a boycott or a strike. "Fasting is entirely symbolic," he said, "but if you believe in the power of intercession you must acknowledge the concentrated spiritual force of such a renunciation."

On the other hand, lacerated by an inferiority complex which he shares with so many of his countrymen, this leader of the people's India can definitely merge the saint in the

political bargainer. In England I could not understand the confidence and devotion he had aroused in countless Indian villages where scarcely a soul can read or write, as well as among brilliant young students with the gift of many tongues. But when I next saw him—in India—talking quietly among his friends, he fitted much better into the hot, half-darkened apartment, and he gained personality from the affection and awe with which he was evidently regarded. When I slipped into the room with a poet who dreams beautifully and illogically of an Indian heaven on earth, the Mahatma was saying that the worst self-government is better than foreign rule. Next moment he was insisting that every villager must spin. In order to induce a general atmosphere of spinning, he would be willing to forbid the import of foreign cloth. But (as I longed to point out, but dare not, because of the respectful attitude which precluded argument) he would still be defeated by the Indian mills which are producing more and more every year, and by the fact that India badly governed by herself would never be left alone to do so FOR herself. Japan and Russia would interfere.

Yet there are moments when Gandhi is very human and understandable. If he talks about his early life, he is even amusing. When he can forget what he describes as the "Satanic nature of the civilization that dominates Europe to-day," he is apt to tell pleasant tales of his earliest visit to London when he was only nineteen, although six years married. Then he learned laboriously to dance and was a trifle shocked at himself so that he came back to his lodging from such frivolous classes and read Matthew Arnold's *Light of Asia*, Christ's Sermon on the Mount, and Tolstoy's philosophy. In those days he acknowledges he had a hankering to be smart. He bothered about his clothes and the correct arrangement of his tie—"Ten minutes every day it took in front of a huge glass."

I doubt if the Mahatma possesses a mirror now, but he still keeps his books of law. They take the place of a child's exercises. The saint regards them with amusement, for what a waste of time they represent, and the politician with exasperation, for the law has not benefited India. "The West," says Gandhi-of-the-dual-nature, "is enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy." Fearful perhaps of any such entanglement he will own nothing which is not strictly necessary.

There are times when I think the cause of the untouchables is dearer to Gandhi than the cause of Indian independence, and for them he has done a great work. When he speaks of the oppressed multitude, forbidden even the consolation of the temples, he is at his best, simple and sincere. I heard him once talking to three or four students whose deep respect did not prevent them from arguing. It was in the house of a member of Congress. The large room was very well furnished. Most of the things in it came from England.

Gandhi insisted on sitting on the floor, but he undoubtedly dominated the little assembly. A very lovely Indian lady asked him intelligent questions, and he replied with understanding and no rhetoric. Then, unfortunately, somebody mentioned British rule and the phrase was as a red flag. The Mahatma lost his simplicity and began to repeat the political slogans he has committed to paper: "If you say British rule is indispensable, you deny the existence of a supreme God," and "India has every right to misgovern herself if she wants to. . . ."

While the Mahatma was greeting other arrivals in the pleasant house of the Hindu member of the Congress, I asked a young Indian professor: "Can you explain exactly what Gandhi has done for India?"

"He's shown us that we can't copy Europe. We've got to be ourselves and Indian. We can't accept European civiliza-

tion as a gift in a neat packet. We've got to make our own mistakes, not yours——”

The lovely lady broke in : “ The Mahatma is our one chance of being united.” She explained that the vast illiterate population could only follow a religious leader, and Gandhi himself said : “ The villagers *feel*. They do not *think*.”

Once I asked him what he most wanted in life. I expected the answer would be ‘ to serve India.’ He looked at me with blind eyes and said : “ Peace.” Yet, that, I am sure, would only be the need of a particular moment, for his is a chaotic mind, complex as the many-limbed figures of his own gods. His actions, ideas, and speeches are equally contradictory. At one moment he is an ardent pacifist, resisting every occupation more violent than spinning. At another he insists : “ Disarmament means the emasculation of a nation.”

Honest certainly and intelligent, but a self-centred mystic, he lives regrettfully in one world, and dreams of another—“ When we are free, we shall have peace.”

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